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ORDER AND PROGRESS.

PART I.

THOUGHTS ON GOVERNMENT.

PART II.

STUDIES OF POLITICAL CRISES.

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B. 2933.

BY

FREDERIC HARRISON

OF LINCOLN'S INN.

'Society without a Government is no less impossible than Government without a Society.'

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TO MY

Father

I INSCRIBE THESE PAGES

WITH A LIFE-LONG SENSE OF THE TRUTH

THAT

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL OF POLITICS IS

THE HOME.

PREFACE.

THIS VOLUME, without pretending to be a systematic treatise, is something more than a casual collection of essays. Of the two parts of which it consists, the first is new; the second contains some essays which appeared in the 'Fortnightly Review,' and which are now republished with the courteous consent of the Publishers and Editor.[1] These have now been re-arranged, condensed, and revised. I have so little taste for a medley of published articles, that, in spite of constant invitation, I should still hesitate to present them in a permanent form, were it not that those now offered to the public were originally written on a regular plan, to urge a particular policy. I withheld them from collection in a volume until circumstances might permit me to work them into a whole, and set forth the principles on which they were written. This I am now enabled to do; and, as the spirit in which

[1] It is impossible for me to express fully the obligations of every kind which I owe to my friend, JOHN MORLEY.

they originated may not have been apparent when issued separately at long intervals, I have tried to explain this in some connected Thoughts on the Theory of Government.

With regard to the Second Part, I am very conscious that nothing can make a collection of political articles a methodical work. They must necessarily contain matters of temporary interest, much that is discontinuous, and a good deal of sameness. The political writer, like the public speaker, who thinks he has anything to recommend, must urge his views upon any audience he can find, on every occasion that occurs, and with any illustration he can obtain. These papers were written with a political, not with a literary purpose; and that purpose may be described as the consideration, independent of party or class, of the sources of efficiency in government. The present time seems especially favourable to reflection upon such a theme.[1]

There is one construction against which I am anxious to guard my meaning. In advocating vigorous government, I might be supposed to favour arbitrary power; and in urging energetic legislation, I might seem to exaggerate the sphere of Law. Both are the reverse of my contention. A very vigorous govern-

[1] It concerns myself rather than the public, but there are reasons why I take the opportunity of saying that, with the exception of a few papers published many years ago, I have never written upon politics or on anything else without signing my name.

ment may be scrupulously careful to do nothing in the spirit of violence; whilst a very vacillating government is often restlessly oppressive. I certainly do not wish to see authority invested with any greater force; for it is sometimes too harshly exerted, as it is. It is a very different thing to wish that the power of the nation, when used at all, should be guided by decision of purpose and systematic skill.

Again, as to the sphere of legislative interference, far from desiring to see it extended, there are many subjects which I wish to see wholly withdrawn from government control, and left to their own free growth. It would no doubt be better for all concerned, if the sphere of legislation were much reduced, whilst, what is attempted, were done in a more scientific way. They are far from encouraging the high-handed spirit in administration, or the meddlesome habit in Parliament, who call only for system and efficiency in Government, as well as Legislation.

March 20, 1875.

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PART I.

THOUGHTS ON THE THEORY OF GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THESE essays were designed to invite attention to the conditions which good government must fulfil, rather than to discuss the manner in which political rights should be enjoyed. How to reorganise our governing machinery from within is, I hold, a question more urgent, perhaps it is a question more easy of solution, than how our Constitution shall be reconstructed from without. For almost two generations political activity has exhausted its resources in promoting or resisting projects for the redistribution of power. In the meantime the efficiency of government itself has too often been neglected by both parties alike; and the things which government ought to do were commonly forgotten, whilst all were contending how political rights should be shared. They who were struggling for the possession of power had no mind to consider the defects which were all that time accumulating within and around the very prize of contention; nor did they care to reflect how decrepit a thing that political power might prove when they had finally secured it for themselves. It would be, I am assured, to more purpose, and I think it would be easier, were

our aim to become that of raising government itself to the level of its actual duties—duties which we see to be perpetually increasing in difficulty, for they daily become more delicate and yet more complex, whilst the contest as to who shall undertake them is continually increasing in fury. In such a condition of things I think it may be useful from time to time to reflect upon the truths which are covered, and sometimes overwhelmed, beneath the ebb and flow of recurrent political tempests. From time to time I think we may usefully examine the conditions which all institutions must obey, and the primary principles which inform all phases of political life. My object will be satisfied if in these pages there be found any line, which may serve to promote the attention of any reader, towards what seems to me the true, but, alas! almost obsolete problem in politics—how out of the débris of institutions, half-feudal and half-democratic, to construct an efficient engine of government.

This subject may be handled, one would think, by any man who cares for his country, without the necessity of assuming the traditional badges of Conservative or Liberal camp. That Conservatism which clings to the names and externals of institutions we need hardly concern ourselves to satisfy. We are not careful to answer those who hold that the machinery of our State administration is as perfect as the theory of the Constitution itself. I shall assume, and I care for no reader who will not so far go with me as to assume, that the ways in which our laws are made, expounded, and administered have in them much that

is wasteful and vicious, that Government is constantly inadequate to deal with admitted national requirements, that such political government as survives goes its course with strange looseness of discipline, towards aims mostly fortuitous, on a tenure consciously precarious. I shall assume that our legislative machinery is unsystematic, our State action uncertain, vacillating, and very often haphazard; that the whole political atmosphere of the time is one of unstable equilibrium charged with ambiguous elements. They who are satisfied not only with the Constitution under which we live, but also with the way in which its constituent parts perform their functions, who think this England of to-day to be not merely a prosperous and a quiet country, but to present to the world a pattern of political efficiency and social stability, are welcome to salute me by the name of 'anarchist' or 'absolutist,' or by any other name which they may think more expressive of divergent opinion. I trust not to incur either reproach from those of any political belief, who honestly desire a more scientific engine of government than that which the political conflicts of two centuries have left half shapen in our hands.

The first step towards any improvement must be to recognise the truth about our actual system. In what is not so much a system as an accretion of expedients, compromises, and adaptations, our obvious duty is to look at the realities behind the veil of convention and usage; to test the true working power of forces apart from their nominal or official strength; to gauge the efficient bearing capacity of the venerable

devices which served as the piers of the original construction. The parody of Conservatism, which clings to names as if they were things, which struggles to preserve the forms of institutions by forswearing the principles they exist to foster, which calls in the spirit of anarchy in order to defend the symbols of order; this is that dry-rot by which so many States have passed through silent decay, to ultimate ruin. There is nothing destructive in probing the rottenness and dilapidation of old institutions, if our purpose be, that they may be made equal to their actual requirements. Nor, again, is there anything conservative in patching up with gilding and paint the façades of old institutions, which we know to be within, in many a cardinal feature, cumbrous, rickety, and unwholesome. Institutions may often be altered without destruction or harm: the true political evil is the tampering with organic truths which are the life of all societies.

CHAPTER II.

PARLIAMENT AS EXECUTIVE.

THE key-stone of our present political fabric, that which now distinguishes it from any other that ever existed, and almost that ever was imagined, is the practical confusion of executive and legislative elements, the nearly unqualified autocracy of Parliament. That a great nation, itself but the nucleus of a vast agglomerated empire, should be permanently ruled by two co-ordinate Chambers, whereof one is a huge floating assembly of 658 elected members; that this heterogeneous crowd, or rather double crowd, should really, if indirectly, administer as well as legislate; that it should appoint, control, correct, and direct the so-called executive government; that it should ordain technical rules on the most trivial details of police, the nicest points of jurisprudence, and the mere routine of administrative organisation; that these should all be argued about, and often wrangled over, scrambled for, and ultimately decreed, amidst scenes which sometimes remind men of the rival coteries of a club—all this, I repeat, has come by habit to seem so natural, that we take it as a piece of almost revealed wisdom, destined to outlast European civilisation. Yet it is in itself outrageously unnatural, and has never before been

ventured on by civilised man; not even in that portent of chaotic usurpation the French Assembly of to-day, (Jan. 1875), where at least the clauses of Bills are quietly discussed in business committees. Nor is even this the measure of our exaggeration of Parliament and its functions. Beyond and over and above the executive autocracy of the House of Commons, itself almost entirely the growth of this century, there has grown up in the nation during nearly the same period an unwritten code of artificial doctrines about parliamentary oratory, and the intellectual and practical value of continuous speech. Beneath these doctrines political activity, thought, and energy, of the creative kind, have been largely thrust into the background; and there has blossomed up a crop of conventional tests of political capacity, as little akin to politics as battles on the stage are akin to war. It has come to us all to seem quite natural, of the essence of liberty and progress at once, that Parliament, that is the real government of this country, should sit in effect about five months in each year, and should then spend seven months on its 'private affairs;' that the chief part of the five working months should be devoted to prolonged oratorical tournaments; that during these five months the so-called Ministers should stand ready with lance and shield, *i.e.*, of course, with reasons, good, plausible, or evasive, as the case may be, to meet all comers according to the rules of the game; that during the session whatever in the way of governing is expected from Ministers, is that which may win a majority at the precise moment in question; that during the long recess little can be expected

from them at all, except to repair their exhausted energies and their battered Bills, so that they may just work their way eventually amidst incessant criticism. Unhappily the artificial atmosphere of opinion within the walls of Parliament, amidst the glamour of which rhetorical or tactical feats appear as achievements of national importance, through infinite pores and the multiplicity of the press, affects the fibre of the body politic. So that we are growing to feel the same passion for these mere spectacles of rival skill, apart from great national improvement, which the people of the Lower Empire felt for the charioteers in their circus with the enemy at their gates. We talk of the changing of a Ministry as if it was the saving of a nation; the splendid resources which an eminent debater exhibits in securing his rival's seat, are praised as if they really gave a title to the gratitude of the public; and the great parliamentary personage is the first of national benefactors. It can never be told how deeply this passion for theatric displays in debating has blinded men's sight for the quality of real executive power; how distorted men's judgment has become on such questions as these (nor are any questions more momentous)—what Government should do, how best to do it, by what sort of man may it be done, in what does the political action of citizens consist?

We hear much within and without the walls of the Houses of the wonderful achievements of recent legislation; and we listen to cries for an era of rest after such stupendous labours. But he who will shake his mind free from the artificial light in which these labours

are presented, will acknowledge how little they imply the highest powers of statesmanship. Financial questions, it is true, are the old and natural domain of parliaments; and in the establishment and completion of free trade a considerable work has been done in the House of Commons for the space of a whole generation. But financial questions are precisely those which it despatches most readily, and those on which the House interferes least with the management of a financier whom it trusts. Financial questions apart, how really moderate are the results of the legislation of a generation! How vastly has the magnitude of Reform Acts, Ballot Acts, Disestablishments, Land Acts, Education Acts, Army, Law, and Sanitary Reform, and the like, been exaggerated by self-complacent optimism. Most of these measures involved no doubt a principle of some importance, on which it was highly desirable that opinion should express itself in the nation, and essential, according to all our traditions, that formal sanction should be given in Parliament. But they almost all were little more than extensions of a system already at work, and often an extension of infinitesimal value. What is there in all this to occupy the political activity of thirty millions during a whole generation? Some of these reforms have been well done, some of them ill done. Some of them have resulted in good, some have had no result at all. But they all, on a broad estimate, belong to the sphere of minor administrative improvement, and not to the sphere of high and arduous statesmanship. The principle once decided (and this, I insist, was undoubtedly

a matter for parliamentary sanction), the actual organisation of the change, over which sessions were spent in vain, and Niagaras of speech and print were discharged, could have been effected far better by a great administrative statesman, in a tenth of the time and with a thousandth part of the labour. In any of the great State organisations—and without turning to the Continent we may find our examples in India—the trifling legislative revisions which appear to our parliamentary imagination such really Homeric battles, would have been treated as the current work of single departments. I repeat again, that they necessarily involved the sanction of Parliament, and I repeat that an arbitrary settlement of them was out of the question. But when we are disposed to sing pæans to the legislative industry of our modern Parliament, let us reflect what trifles are our reforms about a petty local sect, the farm customs of a single province, a handful of officers, the adding new voters, the making them vote in secret, extending the children's schools, rearranging the law courts, and closing taprooms, when these are contrasted with the truly great undertakings of governing genius. Let us compare these with the abolition of serfdom in Russia, the organisation of the German army, the coordination of the German Empire, the transformation and bifurcation of the Austrian Empire, the resettlement of India at the Mutiny, the aggregation and unification of the Italian kingdom, the reabsorption of armies and pacification of the United States after their civil war, the reorganisation of the French bureaucracy, finances, army, and municipalities, after the most awful

catastrophe which ever befell a modern nation. Truly, the men who carried out such tasks as these must smile to hear of the consummate achievements of our parliaments, much as we smile when we listen to the vaunts of eloquent and pragmatical vestrymen. Happy are we as a nation that we have not passed through such tremendous upheaval, and happy that our time is not cast in the midst of such violent crises! But we have—the more so that our days are prosperous and bright—our own national needs, perhaps the more difficult to supply, as it must be done with a gentle hand. Thus before we boast of our home achievements in Government, let us think what achievements really mean.

Thinking this, and I will not here anticipate what may be read in some of the republished Essays,[1] I have asserted complete freedom in describing all or any of the evils, which I see in the monstrous overgrowth of parliamentarism in our political life, and its modern assumption of executive functions; and in doing this I have neglected no means at my command to make it appear to others as irrational as it does to myself. If devotees of the parliamentary fetish are scandalised at what they may look on as profane mockery of their venerable institution, I can only remind them that political discussion is not always obliged to be solemn, and that they who have a serious desire for change, and a reasoned scheme of change, are amply entitled to argue by means of a smile. I am far more alive to the fact that the very fountains of mirth and of satire

[1] Part ii. Essays I., II., and IV.

may seem to be exhausted on this topic, and that he who writes anything on the cumbrous inefficiency of Parliament as an executive organ, can only be thought to re-echo the immortal Latter-day Pamphlet.[1] But the inditer of that dithyramb of wisdom and burlesque, which rings through the political arena like the voice of laughter 'holding both his sides,' has poured upon the very name of Parliament a cataract of scorn, and has somewhat diminished the force of his counsel. Practical politicians will at present recognise the fact that the parliamentary system in principle is simply the political evolution of the English people, that nothing but a moral earthquake could suddenly annihilate its hold over the English mind, and that for ages statesmen in this island will probably need to work along with, or at least in spite of, this hold, and not altogether without it.

For my own part I feel as deeply as any man can feel, the glorious roll which history has graven for our Parliament, and how closely its record is entwined with the fibres of character for the whole English-speaking race. Its one unique achievement in political science, the practical solution of the world-old problem as to 'the power of the purse,' is a contribution to social life of really crucial importance. Nor must we undervalue the uses of Parliament as the ultimate judgment-seat of public opinion, so far as public opinion admits of official expression. It is at least

[1] Nor can I omit the trenchant criticism contained in Mr. Mill's Essay on Representative Government, in the pregnant Chapter V. on the Functions of Representative Bodies.

the House of final appeal, and so far a step superior to the final appeal of battle. It can give the casting vote of all debates and controversies; and though, like the casting vote in most bodies, it is often given neither very ingenuously nor very wisely, even this is better than permanent indecision. Lastly, our English parliamentary customs have taught the world something about the three great virtues in the public service, Publicity, Economy, and Honesty; in two, at least, of which we may remember we are yet far in arrear of the consummate bureaucracy of Prussia. All these things are of value above price to a nation, and worthy to be preserved at almost any cost. But whilst it is quite true that much has been gained for these ends within the walls of Parliament, it is equally true that they form no part of the recent usurpation by Parliament of executive and administrative functions, and would in no way suffer were that usurpation to end. On the contrary, these great conquests of our political good sense would be more effectually secured to our children if the House of Commons became again what in its grand days it was, a consultative and not an executive body, were it called on to sanction, and to find resources for government, instead of assuming to govern. Were Parliament in this sense to reform the parliamentary system instead of reforming the suffrage, it would be preserving for us the best of its national services; and would effectually answer the cries which are now being uttered, sometimes with passion by thinkers, and often vaguely amongst masses of citizens, for its absolute displacement by another power. This

country differs from all countries in Europe, in that it is committed by the traditions of two centuries to the principle of a parliamentary system. And though an incorrigible course of chaotic misrule might drive the English nation to abrupt breach with their historic system, such a breach of continuity in the life of a nation is one of the worst of calamities; such as no one but a Jacobin by principle would welcome, when the gradual reformation and transformation of the system from within is a work both feasible and safe.

CHAPTER III.

THE PARLIAMENTARY AND THE PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS.

We are sometimes assured that whatever be the defects of our parliamentary system, they are still to be cheerfully endured, because they spare us the greater evils of the only possible alternative, a system of presidential election. According to this view, in a State where the real, if not the nominal, Government is ultimately designated by public opinion, no second term can be found between a system, where the executive power is held and administered by a representative Chamber, and a system where the executive magistrate is directly elected by the suffrages of the entire body of the people. And it is sometimes added or implied that the method of electing a president as now practised in the United States, with all its concomitant evils (resulting in an official corporation, the creation of popular elections), forms a natural or inevitable part of any variety of the presidential system. Certainly the evils of perpetual elections for the chief magistracy, when one exhausting canvass is hardly over before the next begins, and the very telegraph boys should 'go out with the Government,' may well make one hesitate, if the only alternative to our actual system is that which still exists in the United States to the grief

of so many honest men in the Republic. However, there is not the slightest connexion between the Presidential system in principle and those excrescences, which grew out of the grand plan of the illustrious Founders, and under which it is buried by the jealousy or conservatism of the American public. The Presidential system exists at present in many communities, and it has existed in times past in many more, without any of the characters or evils which we see in the American republic, and it might easily be developed there under other forms, or recalled to its original type. It has existed in forms and under conditions the most widely various. It exists to-day (January 1875) in fact, though hardly in theory, in France; it existed the other day in fact and in theory in Spain; it existed in a widely different form in the Commonwealth of England; yet in all of these cases, whatever evils it had, they were certainly not those which have marred the wisdom, that presided over the foundation of the United States.

But the truth is that the choice is not limited to two definite alternatives: the Presidential, or the Parliamentary system. There is no specific contrast between them at all. There have been, and there may be, countless modes in which the relations of executive and legislative power may be arranged in States, with all kinds of modification and mixture of plan; they none of them are marked off from the others by rigorous differences, and they insensibly approach and melt into each other. There may be an Executive perfectly distinct from the Legislature or Parliament; or the two

may be inextricably united in one. The Executive may be paramount in importance over the Legislature and directly created by the nation, and this is in great measure the case in the United States; or the Legislature may be paramount, and the Executive may be its creature, as it has been of late years at times in France, and as is every day becoming more utterly the rule in England. Or again, the two may be co-ordinate, as to some extent was the old theory of the American Constitution, and is at this moment perhaps the theory in France, not to speak of England. Or again, there may be arrangements by which all these methods may be combined, balanced, used alternately, played off against each other, corrected, or neutralised; and in France at this moment they seem almost to have attained perfect equilibrium, the point of total indifference. Those who are curious in specimens of ingenuity supplied by the past in this great art of Constitution-making, which Sieyès alone of mankind is believed to have exhausted, may follow out these endless combinations as far as life and human endurance can carry them. This task will not be attempted by the present writer, to whom no result worthy of the labour is apparent therefrom. Suffice it for our purpose that there are not two stereotyped systems of Presidential or Parliamentary Government, but a very great variety of systems, in which both elements combine in many proportions.

Our present purpose in this book lies wholly beside the question of the Presidential or the Parliamentary systems; and as in England we have not the least

taste for paper Constitutions, we are not about to enter on this formidable speculation, if for no reason, at least for this, that we have got a Parliamentary system, and we have not got the germs or even the conditions of the Presidential system. As a practical matter, what we have to consider is the gradual improvement of our Parliamentary methods. Even were Parliament jealously to retain in the amplest way the power, which in practice it certainly has, of the indirect appointment of the actual Executive, it would be possible without doing more, to change the conditions and authority of that Executive in very signal ways. What is debated in these pages is certainly not any scheme for founding an Executive independent of Parliament by direct popular vote, for such an idea has hardly become intelligible to the nation. What is debated is rather, how out of Parliament itself a real Executive may evolve. What is doubted is, whether an assembly, in calmly assuming to be an executive Government, is not wholly transcending possibilities. It seems to be beyond doubt, that our peculiar *Cabinet* system has been the machinery, by which Parliament, unseen, and perhaps unconsciously, has gradually incorporated the Executive in itself, whilst all the time professing a spurious veneration for the Throne, so that the most ancient monarchy in Europe has been made the instrument of unbounded democracy, in the true sense of the term. It serves politicians to represent it as the triumph of the people over royalty: it remains to be seen if it be not the triumph of the aristocracy over common sense and efficiency.

The other day a leading statesman of this country told the American people that, in many important respects, our own Parliamentary system secured a more direct control over the Executive power than the Presidential system, which has created Andrew Johnson and Ulysses Grant; and thus that, on our side of the Atlantic, we had so far carried to greater perfection, effectually even if unconsciously, one of the cardinal doctrines of the democratic creed. There can be little doubt that this leading statesman was right; and to those who put democracy before efficiency it may seem a satisfactory boast. But it will appear to the reader of these pages, that this claim will not here be treated as any kind of recommendation. The Executive of Parliament into which our Constitutional Monarchy has drifted, is none the less an instance of democratic impotence, that it is exercised by an aristocratic or plutocratic assembly, amidst ancient historic pretensions and high popular titles. But none the less, because it is legal, antique, and yet democratic, may the sovereignty of Parliament involve a practical anarchy; if it so cling to the forms and style of power, that it must keep the very keys and cabinets of State jealously within the grasp of its fingers; if it decline so much as to nominate an Executive which shall be anything more than one of its own committees; if it insist that all government shall be carried on, as it were, under its own eye and within its own walls, and constitute itself the real and only Executive, with a few Ministers who are often merely its clerks. The state of things to which we have arrived is really little

more than this—that Parliament is not merely the fountain of government, or the arbiter of government, but the Government itself; that every department of State, with the striking exception of Foreign Affairs, is little but a committee of Parliament; that the House of Commons is become in effect a huge floating Cabinet, and the first Minister, the real head of the English nation, is the temporary chairman of this leviathan Ministry. In fact, the Cabinet system, which began as an engine of Royal Executive, has gradually developed into an engine of parliamentary Executive; nay, it seems going so far, that the Cabinet itself is disappearing, as it has done in France, in the larger assembly of which it is now the creature. It is impossible that any nation with the political genius of Englishmen, could have seen with composure their Executive Power swallowed up in the Legislative and Deliberative element, unless their eyes were blinded by the imposing fiction of a titular crown. It may well be, that the Presidential system is a thing to be preferred to this. But in any case, without resorting to a change so portentous, much might be done, even under the Parliamentary system, to remedy so vast an anomaly, and at least to recognise the truth that Parliament has constituted itself in our Royal Republic, at once the President as well as the King.

CHAPTER IV.

LIBERAL PROGRAMMES.

It will be already sufficiently apparent, that it is not in the direction of recasting the suffrage, that I look for the true reform of Parliament. There is, to my mind, no panacea, indeed there is nothing tangible at all, in any of the rival projectors' schemes for *re-manipulating* the franchise. None of them, I am persuaded, would have any effects, approaching the measure expected by advocates and opponents alike. The various professorial devices for regenerating society, by giving votes to minorities, to women, classes, groups, properties, or acquirements, exhibit to my mind only the art of Constitution-making in its stage of pragmatical dotage. To a politician they must appear little better than toys, for the excellent reason that they would make no serious change. The *extension* of the suffrage in the old way to the rural labourer is no doubt a different thing, because it is a reality and not a plaything. There can be little doubt about the probable effect upon Parliament, rather by stimulating its activity and its sense of responsibility, than by changing its character; by making it, indeed, less rather than more democratic; by forcing on greater concentration, rather than by promoting further dispersion in the

exercise of power. It is, moreover, a measure of justice and even of precaution, and without it social discontent can never be effectually abated; besides, it is in the destiny of the Parliamentary system. It must be some day conceded; and as English society now stands, even the widest extension of the suffrage would be no formidable change; whilst, until the suffrage question has been fairly exhausted by the admission of all as competent citizens to nominal power, the true reform of the Government and Parliamentary machine will hardly be attempted in earnest.

Thus, although I have advocated in these Essays, and still advocate, the extension of the franchise in due course on the sole ground that I believe it will directly tend to better government, I entirely reject the notion that any extension or any reform of the franchise is the grand object to aim at, or that it is capable of producing very large or very lasting benefits. To my thinking those radical reformers are wrong, who exhaust their strength in seeking such a will-o'-the-wisp as a franchise millennium.[1] On the other hand, there are Conservatives who are committing far worse mistakes, in fiercely resisting reasonable changes, which are just

[1] I say nothing, and in the Essays have said nothing, about what is a very different, and I must add a very real matter of Parliamentary Reform—a redistribution of seats. A redistribution on the scale and in the spirit of the Act of '32 would no doubt exert a very serious influence on legislation—for a season. But schemes for redistributing seats are infinite, and every scheme stands on its own ground. It seems to me, in the present aspect of the Parliamentary question, involving necessarily an immense self-denying ordinance, to be the side of Reform which is far the least easy to carry—indeed, since the failure of Mr. Bright's great project in 1858, to be recognised even amongst Reformers as beyond the range of immediate agitation.

in themselves and can have but very moderate effects in any way. The real party of revolution is that of the reactionists who, inspired by nothing but the passions of Conservatism, under the hallucinations of mere selfish terror, risk the safety of their country for some worthless privilege or form. Both extremes may yet come to see, how much less the franchise can effect, than in their hopes or their fears they foretell. This is the spirit in which I have argued against the extravagance of expectation as to the effects of franchise reform. And in 1875 I can appeal with confidence to the predictions I hazarded in 1867. It is a curious instance of the blindness of party invective that, whilst I was almost ridiculing the importance of the suffrage and the changes then demanded, I was being described as a suffrage radical of the extreme school, and not only a violent but a theoretic democrat.[1] The school of politics in which I have learned, would reject the suffrage altogether as a base of political power. The whole aim of what I have written about Parliament is designed to show, that great and lasting improvements are not to be expected from any variety of franchises, that the powers of the suffrage have been exaggerated by friends and foes, and that any extension of the suffrage, however just and useful, is a temporary expedient of very limited effect.

[1] It is amusing to me to reflect, what were the grounds upon which this notion was somewhat sedulously fostered by a school of remarkable insight and detachment of mind. If I fail in that political quietism which seems to be the note of sundry minor Prophets of Culture, I claim to be a humble follower of the party of Authority, and not of Anarchy.

As with the reform of the House of Commons, so with the existence of the House of Lords, it seems to me that far more is hoped or feared from change, than there is any reason to warrant. To any one treating the House of Peers from the point of view of rational principle, and not of conventional decorum, it can hardly present itself in any other aspect, but that of an historic monument which is also a public nuisance.[1] It only supplies an element in the Constitution which is superabundant without it; and it puts a ponderous drag upon a machine which is hardly able to move by itself. The great estates, the great fortunes, and the chief offices of State, or magnates of society, are so abundantly represented already in the popular House, that we may treat as hardly serious, the claim which is made for the representative value of the Peers. The Upper House is undistinguishable from that portion of the Lower House which sits there by virtue of wealth, rank, or position; and this is at least the larger moiety of the whole. Except that some questions, social and moral, are occasionally treated in the Lords, perhaps in deference to the Bishops, more seriously than is thought to be business-like in the Commons, and that the freedom from constituents enables the Lords occasionally to venture on Foreign Politics, the Upper House in its purely legislative capacity cannot be truly said to add anything but dead weight to the governing machine. On the other hand, the closing of the Peers House as a separate legislative Chamber, would remove but a tithe of the evils, which are to be traced to the maintenance

[1] E.g. *Temple Bar*, January 1875.

of a privileged Peerage in the midst of an industrial republic; evils of a social and a moral, rather than of a political kind. Nay, since it would be impossible to close the one Chamber without admitting its members to the other, the peculiar characteristics of the Peerage might be exerted more heavily upon the Constitution, after such a change than before it. But the radical attempt to effect the change by party legislation would inevitably lead to a struggle, at least as we now are situated, out of all proportion to the benefit expected. English society and our mild political habits have yet to experience the kind of rally we might see, if a serious struggle were commenced to abolish the House of Peers. A progressive statesman of real sagacity, backed by opinion thoroughly in earnest, will never have any difficulty in managing the least bony part of our whole political organism. We shall not, it is true, have real governing efficiency, until skill or fortune shall enable our Governments to work, outside of the débris of an hereditary Chamber. A statesman, with the nation aroused and on his side, who was bent on having his will, need only threaten to send in a regiment of life guards—not of course with purposes of military violence, but to take their seats as members. The plan might be a good beginning for the ingenious project of a *Libro d'oro* of physical nobility, just now attracting such attention. Seriously, to narrow the aim at good government down to a formal attack on an hereditary Chamber, would doubtless encumber that aim with minor struggles and infinite social acerbities; and so adjourn the direct purpose for generations.

In the same spirit I have spoken of the Monarchy. The republican system, in the true sense of the word, seems to me not merely the only rational, but now the only possible system for perfectly mature societies. As M. Thiers reluctantly declares it in France, any other form of civilised society is in the long run hopelessly doomed. But then by republic we must understand not democracy, or the direct government of the masses. A republic, we insist, is a state where, first, the notion that any man or any family has a proprietary right to dispose of the national resources, has been displaced by the habit of regarding all exercise of power as a duty owed to the service of the public; where, secondly, no exercise of public power pretends to be legitimate, unless with the formal ratification of the citizens, and the free co-operation of public opinion. But a commonwealth such as this we already have; and though we retain an hereditary Crown, an hereditary Chamber, and many hereditary pageantries of all sorts, the essential conditions of the republic are now established amongst us. By all the tests of political science this country is now governed on the republican theory; and no one of its functionaries acts less in the spirit of privileged right, and more in the spirit of republican duty, than its present First Magistrate. It is most essential to assert the republican principle, and to use every means of giving that ennobling principle every practical development. But the evils which cluster round the form of Monarchy, and to my mind they are neither few nor small (and the form itself is amongst the chief), are evils again of

the social moral and indirect kind, rather than of the political and direct. The Monarchy, too, has this great merit as a political possibility over the House of Peers, that whilst the leader of a nation could hardly hope ever to convert the Peers into a direct engine of progress, no man can measure the potential forces dormant in the Crown of England, if it should chance to fall upon a combination of persons and circumstances able to evoke them. If a Sovereign of the order of Victor Emmanuel, or at least of the 'Honest King' of the popular legend, fell into close reliance on a great popular statesman of the order of Count Cavour, the quaint prerogatives and historic prestige of our Plantagenet and Tudor pageant might rise to new life, and unfold unsuspected resources. In the meantime a direct attack on the Throne would call up a furious reaction, more extensive and more vehement even, than that which could be awakened in defence of the House of Lords. For the Monarchy is undoubtedly robed with a real historic attraction; it is far more personal and familiar as an institution than anything else we have; it is far more closely invested with sentiment—and sentiment of a plainer kind. A great statesman and a great national party can achieve their practical ends, without risking this unloosing of the floodgates of reaction and Conservative panic; and indeed the possibility may be imagined, that the Monarchy itself might be made available, and something more than neutral. On the other hand, the hour that political education and public spirit shall have reached that stage of advancement, when the

inauguration of the republican form is a matter of self-respect, which the nation shall owe to itself, that hour will be the last of the Monarchy. The republican form will follow, easily and happily to all concerned it may well be, when the republican spirit is fully mature. And thus it is in the name of the republic, and to assert the essential principle of the republic, that we must deprecate any crude propaganda against the Monarchical form, a movement which would lead us far out of politics into the whirlpool of social recrimination and possible civil war, and for which it must be allowed few parts of English society have the requisite civic education.

Such are some amongst the reasons to doubt the wisdom of insisting as a 'programme' on any of the specifics proposed for the repair of our strange Constitutional fabric. To make any part of it the object of a special political cry, would, I think, involve disproportionate effort, and besides draw us far from the aim of political progress. What political struggles of the active kind lie before us in the immediate future, would appear by all the signs of the times, to belong to the ecclesiastical and educational sphere. The vital issues for this generation are plainly laid in the cause of the freedom of thought and religion from the interested wardship of the State. With topics such as these it is no part of the present volume in any way to deal. These pages are confined to the questions which bear on the relation of executive and legislative powers. In this, the temporal sphere of government,—and poli-

tical government has no other than the temporal sphere —the true aim would be found, as I venture to think, in reform far broader, and less capable of expression in party programmes, than any of the piecemeal reforms propounded to renew the Constitutional apparatus. We have to put vigour into the political tone, and to make government an efficient and scientific engine. Were we ever to abandon the routine of Parliamentary sham-fights, the rhetorical war of party, of which men weary as of the siege of Troy, were we to value the art of governing as highly as we value the art of debating, it would certainly be a vaster reform than the demolition, or even the reconstruction, of each part of the Constitutional fabric. There is every ground for believing that such a task would be also far easier; for it has nothing to do with the traditional watchwords of party. It would be a great change if in place of endless discussions, how the Legislature is to be created, we could settle the question as to what it can safely undertake; if, instead of augmenting the chaotic autocracy of Parliament, we restored it to its natural place as the Great Council of the nation; if instead of multiplying its labours as a miscellaneous and unwieldy Executive, we could out of it evolve a substantive Executive, distinct and national in character. Far from requiring further limitations and checks on government, we need a concentration of government, provided always that it be exerted under the impulse of public opinion; for safeguards and counsellors we need to substitute personal authority; for dispersion, centralisation; for complexity, simplicity; for supervision, responsibility.

CHAPTER V.

CARLYLE AND COMTE ON GOVERNMENT.

THIS it will be seen is much in the spirit of that, with which we are familiar in the teaching of Mr. Carlyle. His heroic fire, glowing with a white heat amidst coruscations and fumes wherein his genius loves to work, has burnt in upon the mind almost of our generation a new sense of political duty, and has given fresh meaning to the terms Order and Government. For my own part I can avow nothing but grateful admiration for the power with which he has smitten the parliamentary idol, with which he recalls to life old types of governing capacity, with which he asserts the uses of personal authority; nor shall I be distressed to be told that what I may have said on these heads is no new discovery of my own. Pretending to no discoveries whatever, I willingly claim his authority whenever I can find it available. But it is in the Positive school, whose political motto is the title of this book,[1] and not in the

[1] The criticism of Mr. Mill (*Representative Government*) on the two terms Order and Progress, which he says are not properly opposed, does not apply to the sense in which they are used in the title of this book. By Order we understand the normal conditions and correlations of every systematic whole; by Progress the normal evolution of those relations to their natural result. There is no opposition—hardly any contrast between them. As Comte repeatedly says: 'Progress can be only the development of Order, whilst Order can only be made manifest in Progress.'

school of Hero-worship, that these pages have found their sources. The political teaching of Comte comes in effect to results, analogous to, but not the same as, those of Carlyle; but it reaches similar results on very different grounds and by widely contrasted methods. The two differ as the philosopher differs from the poet, as a system differs from an idea. They agree in rejecting on principle direct democratic government, whether the democracy be that of popular plebiscites or cultured assemblies; they agree in justifying concentrated government vested in personal hands; they agree that the type of government is that of a capable head, clothed with ample power and ample trust. The historian loves to contemplate, it would seem, as a permanent type, the hero-soldier, the philosopher has proposed for a revolutionary crisis of disturbance a temporary dictator. But whereas the prophet of Hero-worship invests his head as of Divine, at least Superhuman, Right with material force, sometimes presenting him as a captain quelling the mutiny of an army, sometimes as a shepherd driving a flock, the founder of Positivism regards the ruler as the minister of Public Opinion, giving form to the national will; neither above it nor outside of it, and yet not its creature or its slave. If Comte's temporary dictator would be strong, it is only by virtue of his being strictly a representative man, accepted by numbers, trusted by them, and responsible for the mode in which he uses their strength;

Politically speaking, the idea implies that the fundamental Principles of civil society must be as religiously observed, as the indispensable Changes must be actively promoted.

but he is neither the object of a mysterious consecration, nor is his superiority to the rest at all of necessity unbounded, nor his attitude that of a master or potentate. The source of his power would be more than consent; it is the intelligent, continuous, free support of the numerical, or rather the effective, mass of the citizens. The basis of all government, says Comte, is the co-operation of the society governed centred in an organ of government; and in the final or republican type of society the co-operation is by far the more conspicuous element of the two. To give that co-operation effect, a central power of specially qualified brains, and ultimately at least in each sphere, of some one brain is necessary; but the persons or person who exercise these functions are only the ministers in command of the social combination, the directing agents of the co-operation; nor are they at all required to possess, and certainly they are not permitted to affect, any heroic supremacy over the rest of their fellow citizens. Yet further, lest tyranny and misuse of power which is even worse than obstruction should steal in, the Government would not be entrusted with any power which could long be maintained against the will of the governed: and for this end they must above all things retain the prerogative of sanctioning the existence of any armed force, and of voting all supplies of money. It so happens that in England at least, these two cardinal conditions of a free society are the very warp and woof of our political instincts. For any man or any party in this island to aim at creating a military force independent of Parliament, or to levy taxes not consented

to by the nation, is a notion as monstrous and abnormal in its extravagance, as the notion of a Roman citizen during the long history of the Republic aiming to make himself king. We have but to consecrate afresh these central ideas of freedom, to extend their application, and hedge them round with (if possible) fresh protections, and we may dismiss at once the fear, that under any conceivable form of government a despotic use of power is possible within this island to any man or any group of men. If an authoritative form of government means despotism, or even the risk of despotism, not a word more is to be said; the very name is not likely to be heard in our language. So far as Positivism is concerned, nothing could be more abhorrent to its social, peaceful, industrial, and republican spirit than sardonic maxims about 'thirty millions mostly fools,' 'whiffs of grape shot,' and all the other apologies for self-will, violence, and personal ambition which may be constructed out of the Gospel of Heroic Lawgiving. With all its nobility of aim at the higher life, and all its rare insight into human character, that Gospel will remain one, which glorifies the individual, at the expense of the social, type of greatness; which almost cynically repudiates the social source of all personal greatness; which gives us epigrams, apophthegms, and poems, when systematic science only can avail. Political problems must be approached either in the spirit of practical sagacity, or of philosophical breadth; they are not to be unlocked by artistic or literary genius. Brilliant analyses of character, historic pictures of distant societies, are but thin equipments

for political action, to armour forth the men who must contend to-day and provide for the morrow. Requiems over an extinct civilisation belong to art; they may belong to education, and even religion, but they do not constitute a political philosophy; for the ordering of modern societies needs plainer lessons than any which may be found in the most stirring blasts of high psalmody to the heroes of old.

Nor must we forget the very gulf which is set between all that is said of politics by Comte and by Carlyle. With Comte, philosophy is strictly kept in its own defined domain. He has never forgotten that a philosophy can deal with social systems only in an abstract and general way, laying down only fundamental conditions and governing laws, and leaving all applications and all concrete judgments to the practical wisdom of those who are called on to deal with each case. The question of modification and of gradual adaptation is a sphere wholly belonging to them, and not to the abstract thinker, and the sphere so assigned is on any near view of current situations almost the whole that is apparent. Lastly, the future of political societies is one that depends on the slow collective evolution of the characters and minds of those, who actively compose those societies. They are not to be mechanically recast and regenerated off-hand even by the practical chiefs of action, much less then by the speculative chiefs of thought. In Carlyle, with all that genius of singular insight, as free from conventional prejudice as an ancient Saga, it is singular to watch what confusion and violence will result, when a man

with heroic temper and astonishing instinct, presumes to fling aside the eternal barriers between the temporal and the moral sphere, the work of the thinker and the work of the statesman, between poetry and practical wisdom, spiritual exhortation and political project. The result is a splendid medley of passion, religion, art, wisdom, extravagance, sophism, and vision, in which the noble social truth of the thinker is often lost amidst the subversive dreams of the reformer, and the immortal truths of practical wisdom lose all their outline and identity amidst the blaze of literary coruscation, which plays round them like the summer lightning. With Comte, history and principle form indeed the basis of education, and so the guiding lines of conduct; but action with him, as with Aristotle, is the field of practical men in practical methods. Of all dreams, that which he most repudiates is the pedantocracy, or the attempt to discipline communities by arbitrary authority on ideal lines. And that is a pedantocracy, which attempts by some mighty literary shears to make a *tabula rasa* of civilisation, and there to plant some spectre of absolutism, brought like the slumbering emperor from his ancient tomb in the mountain side. The only Government which has a chance of life is one that is ever tentative, its atmosphere compromise, its code good sense, its force combination. Violence, utopias, pedantries, revivals, idealism of any sort, are alien to the practical life of societies, which is ordered and organic evolution. Nor is political good to be secured by mere political methods. To the positive philosopher, the best laws

administered by the best men, a perfect Government in the hands of an ideal governor, would appear able only in part to improve even our political world, and could do almost nothing for the moral and the social world. A mere political remedy is, in plain words, an arrant quackery, and no such quackery was ever proposed by Comte. Underneath all social facts, in his eyes, lies the want of a social and intellectual resettlement. Positivism means a regeneration and not a revolution: a regeneration, not in the narrow sense of the old religion, but just as truly in a religious sense. It is only as a corollary of this, and through the agency of this, that political reform is a practical hope. And thus, what political teaching was ever propounded by Comte is but part, and but the lesser part, of a scheme for a comprehensive synthesis or organisation of society. To the efficiency, even to the existence of his political machinery there must go a previous education, both of the individual citizen and of general public opinion, a new standard of social morality, and the active operation of a set of moral institutions. Grouping the whole Past as the parent big with the Future, making Progress to be but the bringing to maturity the existing materials, laying the foundations of intellectual, practical, and moral advancement, on the one side in history, on the other in man's balanced nature, Auguste Comte has sought to present an organic microcosm of social principle. But his entire teaching remains in the sphere of counsel and not of enterprise. He propounds a method of life, not a plan for recasting

institutions. It is not a political programme, but a social doctrine.

It is then most strange to note how the name of Comte, with some of the superficial and the half-informed, has become associated with suggestions of disorder and schemes of violence. With some of these laborious caricaturists he seems to revive the Macchiavelli of the Prince; with some the prophet of the International League. To say that Comte has insisted upon Order in all forms of human life more urgently than perhaps any writer on social organisation, that he has preached more emphatically the value of all the eternal institutions and relations of human society, as they have existed for ages, that his very mind and nature have affinity for all the really conservative forms of life, and all the really conservative events and names in history—this is to say, by comparison, little of all that might be said. But even were his whole spirit and teaching less conservative than they are, in the higher senses of a noble but abused quality, he would be of all men the least deserving of a charge, whether of tyranny, violence, or anarchy, because he stands almost alone amongst political philosophers in declaring the idleness of philosophy in politics proper, and in claiming the whole field of practical life for practical men, making it their first duty to proceed in tentative ways. Hence we find the phenomenon of the founder of a political system, denouncing the attempt to place even that system in the first order of human requirements, and above all, denouncing the idea of forcing it upon the world as a system at all. Of all the types of

ruler there are few more contrary to every principle of Comte than that which once was familiar to Europe, 'the philosophic despot;' whilst, on the other hand, no better syllabus could be drawn of all the propositions, whether political, social, or industrial, which are abhorrent to positive theories, than the actual dogmas of the famous 'International,' as formulated in their communistic, subversive, and terrorist ideal by their great German Lawgiver. It is quite true that Comte is nothing if not an innovator, that his principles mean enormous changes in life, society, and states, and that his principles mean, above all things, action and not theory. Like every religion, positivism means in one sense renovation, and in its pure sense even revolution. But revolution in things human at bottom is as inevitable and natural as the earth's revolution on its axis; it is the first and most enduring of the laws of nature, for it is the inherent property of Time itself. And whilst this planet shall revolve, and out of its revolving days and years fresh combinations of circumstance shall ever be evolved, the question for reasonable men is only—down what paths of good or of ill shall this inexorable revolution shape their lives, seeing that the limits of variation both of Good and Ill are fixed, but that the possible alternatives are still of tremendous consequence?

Of this at least, in regard to Comte, all men may rest most perfectly assured. To whatever degree (and the degree is almost unlimited) that he contemplates eventual Progress and therefore systematic change, it is most clear, that in things political, he of all men

is farthest from all that is arbitrary, violent, and subversive. He has taught political doctrines, whilst warning men never to rely on political doctrines; he labours at political theories, the very first of which is, that practical politics are not the sphere of theorists. In the whole range of his writings it is rarely indeed that he descends to the concrete application of any theory whatever. From this cause, and from the fact that he shows incessantly how special cases in practice ever admit of special adaptation, the range which he leaves open for practical application is very various and wide. Adherents of positive principles are no more to be debarred from addressing public opinion than the adherents of any other school of thought, and it is most undesirable that they should be excluded. Hence one who, as the writer of these pages, is endeavouring from a basis of general principle to estimate the situation of the day, has a wide field left open for unaided judgment. This extensive limit of variation, and also of potential aberration, is very much enlarged when the very first maxim of his general theory is the importance of special adaptation where practical interests demand it. And of all subjects of political inquiry, the world of English politics offers perhaps the widest field for special adaptation, for it is in its essence a very special variety of political phenomenon, abnormal, independent, accidental in the most signal degree. Hence, if it is possible for two minds, both full of the same doctrines, to make very different use of these doctrines in practice, this is especially true of those who attempt to illustrate or extend into current politics

these positive doctrines, and in the highest degree when the subject is the England of to-day. I am not aware that I have undertaken a hopeless or mistaken task in expressing my opinion about public affairs from the ground of my positivist convictions; but I know no reason for enforcing silence on myself, and I have certainly no other convictions from which to work. At least, I trust that no fair reader will assume, firstly, that every general principle which is here supported in theory, is a scheme which any one is prepared to enforce as an isolated dogma on the England of to-day; secondly, that every suggestion I may have made about current politics is necessarily an article of Positive doctrine. I conceive that no one can demand more of a public writer than that he should frankly explain the guiding doctrines by which his judgment is formed, and then should examine affairs of public concern with a fearless and dispassionate purpose. For all such judgments the writer is, and he must be, alone responsible. It may very well be that other exponents of positive principles might deduce from them different concrete conclusions. My judgments have been formed in the school of Comte; but it must not be thought that they of necessity involve the other adherents of that school, much less that they necessarily implicate the abstract teaching of the master himself.

So much has been said of these political doctrines of Comte, often unjustly and hastily, so fully are they the ground of everything contained in these pages, that

it may be well to treat at greater length some of his leading principles of political science. As we have seen, they form part of a much larger whole, much of which they presuppose as established, and all of which they require as concurrent. A political reconstruction of society, he says, must follow and cannot ever precede a moral reconstruction. As a consequence the note of political action at present must be the provisional. Political wants of a certain kind have an urgency in time which many social requirements have not. States and societies must be kept together on pain of tremendous consequences. Governments must exist, for public life cannot be adjourned; or we may all find ourselves in the midst of material difficulties and confusion, so great that moral or intellectual reforms would be a mere mockery. Hence in things practical, compromise, expediency, adaptation, enter to a degree which is not possible, or not safe, in moral and intellectual things. Until we can settle on a really sound philosophy, we had better not consciously set up an unsound philosophy; but any Government which will secure tolerable order is better than absolute confusion. In things practical, we must act in the best way practically allowed by the circumstances and with the materials at hand. And we must act immediately, just as we must in a ship, in a storm, or a fire. To adjourn the settlement of moral, intellectual, and spiritual difficulties, is not to risk the destruction of all that ages have elaborated in attempting to solve them. But to adjourn an efficient Government, is possibly to risk the material achievements, whereby generations have provided for the

safety or progress of the present. The Dutch nation, for instance, might fall into the profoundest condition of mental and religious anarchy, without losing the prospect of ultimately finding the truth. But if they ever fell into such a state of temporal imbecility or chaos, as to ruin their dykes for ever, there would soon be no Holland, on which truth or justice could find a foothold to revive. Thus amidst all the confusion and transition in which the life of modern Europe is cast, the material dykes, which preserve the existence of nations, must by every expedient be maintained. To be tentative, is the condition of all true political activity everywhere; to be provisional, is the necessity of all such activity in the present age. And thus, if we abstract for a special purpose political doctrines, which we hold indispensable for the normal state of society, this does not imply that they can be worked out otherwise than by slow degrees and many intermediate adaptations; much less does it imply the desire to impose them by Jacobin dictation, or to ascribe to them a sort of sacramental efficacy.

CHAPTER VI.

PRINCIPLE OF A PERSONAL ORGAN OF GOVERNMENT.

SOCIETIES present us ever with two co-ordinate facts: on the one hand, co-operation of numbers to a common end; on the other, concentration of that action in a personal organ. The former fact, the co-operation, it is now impossible to forget; that political force is the result of combined efforts, is too obvious in every act of life to be long absent from our thoughts. But it is often regarded as the only element of political force. The second fact, that all joint action requires an individual organ, is apt to be overlooked or undervalued in current thought. We are so much accustomed to think of the power of numbers behind every action of the State, as to forget that without much more the power of numbers is no power at all.[1] The numbers must find a hand to do their will, a voice to express their thoughts, and a brain to give effect to their purpose. Every society as such, displays first, a combination of action; secondly, a distribution of

[1] See Comte, *Positive Polity*, vol. ii. chap. 5, where he works out the aphorism 'society can no more exist without a Government than government could exist without a society,' as being true of every form of association, and as part of the general action of Humanity. This is of its very nature a joint product; whilst it can only exercise its functions through some individual organ.

parts. Where there is no distribution, no variety, there is no society; at the utmost it is an agglomeration. Even in the rudest horde some distribution of function begins; and as societies increase in civilisation the distribution of function, the variety of power, of efficiency, and of office, become more and ever more marked. Differentiation is the law of growth: and beside it, is that other law, too often undervalued, the increasing reaction or tendency towards combination, ever assuming under organic impulses a more and more systematic form. Hence, since every society exhibits as one element, distribution of parts, ever increasing variety, differentiation; the other element of society, co-operation, requires for its existence concentration of many forces in a personal organ. It is impossible to conceive anything that can be called a social action, apart from a personal agent as its embodiment. We are so apt to talk (and now even to think) of a free people governing itself, and of laws made by the nation as a whole, that we pass out of sight one of the most elementary truths of human nature, and forget how irrational and false such language is in its literal sense. Acting individually, neither a million of men nor fifty million of men could make a law of the simplest kind if they toiled for a century. Nor even could a thousand or even a hundred men together make a law. It would always be, *quot homines tot leges*, if they tried for ever, so long as the real individual thought of each citizen acted in honest independence of purpose. The variety of the human mind, character, and circumstance, is

such, the differentiation of society in a high form presents to each human unit such infinite facets of duty and of truth, that it is impossible for a multitude exactly to issue in identical judgments about any single thing. What these really do is to converge, and that in a very high degree; but they are never identical. As the Emperor of old in his monkish retirement groaned out, when he looked over his beloved watches, never synchronous with all his care, they all declare the hour of the day approximately, but no two of them are exactly in time. So the consensus of any society may be very great, and its combined power may be potentially vast; but until the individual differences cease to exist, until some one judgment is adopted as that of the body, there is no common will and no possible action. Even material force requires its individual agent. A mere mob passionately stirred against a hated enemy cannot lay hands on him without an organ, the one, or two, or three persons, who put manual violence to him, and if more than one they must act as one; then they can do nothing with him, unless some voice suggests an action and so decides what to do; some brain must guide, some pair of hands must drag, some opinion must over-master all others, or the mob evaporates and disintegrates, and Sulla, who alone is a concentrated force, stalks home in scornful power. But this is the case of a mere mob, not what we call a society at all; yet even this form of anarchy may serve to illustrate the truth, of the impossibility of joint action without a personal concentration of the common force.

Again, we may take a form of society in which the maximum of uniformity exists, in which it has been artificially produced by stringent discipline for a special end. There is no society in which the human units are (at least for the special end) so nearly identical as an army. Art and habit have made each soldier more like his comrade, in every military use and end, than ever citizen can be made like citizen. Yet an army cannot march a mile, much less fight a campaign, without a commander. The greatest and finest army that ever stood, even if each soldier were himself Napoleon and Bayard in one, would be as powerless as any mob, until the individuals appeared to command its complex action. Discipline even, implying on one side uniformity, implies on the other classification of command. Special tactics have each in their degree, their individual chief; the strategy of the army, as a whole, still more obviously requires it. Councils of war never fight, and could not conduct a campaign for a week. Madness itself, except perhaps in the communal insurrection in Paris, never put an army in commission, much less manœuvred it by universal suffrage.

In an extreme case of a disciplined society, such as an army or a ship, it is impossible to overlook the fact that the organic action of the whole is just as inconceivable without a person from whom the action radiates, as it would be if there were a centre but no convergent parts. An army, a ship's crew, a community of any kind, has no collective brain, or will, or hand. A parish has no parochial arm to arrest a thief

without a constable endowed with muscular tissue and a human understanding (of some kind, however low). It has no collective will until some individual will is adopted; it cannot call out the engine or cleanse the sewers (as, alas! we see), without a substantive human intelligence of some sort. Now a whole parish full of separate intelligences, all differing, even though slightly differing, can do nothing, for they are not a substantive mental power, but an imponderable agglomeration of disparate forces. A body of constables cannot even clear a street, unless each man of the force does things more or less different but converging to one end, whilst one brain conceives and one will desires that co-ordinated end. All this is so trite that we incur the charge of multiplying truism and commonplace in labouring to prove it. The question is, whether true as it may be, we do not habitually forget it in practice in less obvious instances and in complex operations. Our public life has become so utterly one of polls, assemblies, committees, and boards, so habitually do we fix our attention on the combination of many opinions and many wills which they present, that we are apt to forget how completely all those conform to the same law, how much they screen from us the same inner truth, that all combined action of many implies a personal organ as its agent. Parliaments in the aggregate do not really make laws any more than nations as an aggregate do; committees delegate their action virtually to individual members; boards apportion within them the actual work, so that in the ultimate reality, what is done in the collective

name of the body is the work of one, or, at least, each substantive part is the work of one; what is undone is that, at which many work without effacing their differences. Public labours even of the lower degrees of complication are, when we reflect, manifestly the result of a single mind in the last resort. The House of Commons could not even pass a common Act, until its members ceased to act as co-equal units, until it let some one draft the Bill, and then some one persuade it to make it law; nay, even a select committee could not of its own motion draw an Act. Much less could a single course of policy, say even so common a thing as a system of drainage, be carried out unless by an individual mind. It is, no doubt, quite compatible with this, that the individual mind directing should take advice, change its purpose, and adopt other views in part or in whole, and in order that the joint action should be lasting and strong, it must be the focus of many minds and wills, the expression of a vast consensus, not the average, but the sum of the contributing forces. Yet at the same time, so far as the action is really the expression of the aggregate body, it must in like degree be the energy of a distinct personality as its individual organ.

It is true that the individual organ may be constantly changed even in the course of the same collective act or policy. We may change our generals in a campaign or even in a battle, and defeat or inaction is the usual result. The Athenian prytanes had a new president every morning, and some Greek armies were commanded on alternate days by different chiefs. And

so even the real, as well as the apparent organ of a public policy or a national government, may be repeatedly changed, and yet something that can be called a policy or a Government (we see this every session under our own eyes) may, in spite of everything, result. Just so, a picture designed by one master might be finished by another; and even in extreme cases, a picture once conceived might be painted by a master's scholars in turn or in parts, and yet be what might be called a picture after all. Yet, as in the one case so in the other, good work can only issue from sustained individual effort; the more often the organ is changed, the less can the product be called a work. These changes of plan, or of head, should not blind us to the truth. A social action may represent many minds and natures, but it must be at any moment of its production the actual work of one mind and one nature. The best work will be the work, which most distinctly bears that individual impress on it, whilst it is just as truly the expression of the aggregate minds and wills. But government can no more be really the work of many rulers, than a picture can be truly the work of many painters.

The neglect of this truth, that all social action requires concentration in an organ just as much as co-operation by numbers, underlies the whole range of democratic fallacies, and they are a family more prolific than is supposed. We are accustomed to turn our attention so exclusively on the co-operation, that we unconsciously grow into the notion, that numbers could co-operate by direct identical action. We

might as rationally suppose, that an army of 100,000 soldiers would simultaneously raise the right foot and march in a body upon a given point, or go through a collective campaign, by independent free purpose of each individual soldier, without any officers or any word of command. Practically, it is impossible that societies should act in the pure democratic or universal equality way. The real government or personal organ is disguised, or ignored, or almost smothered under forms, which seem to make the civic co-operation an automatic act of each citizen; but so far as any real government exists, or any real action results, there is somewhere a person, a mind, and a will, which originates it. At the same time, the current theory that what Governments do is the direct act of a multitude of citizens, has a paralysing influence over all action, and often reduces government to a cypher or a weather-cock.

The extreme dogmas of the sovereignty of the people, direct government by the nation, in all their forms, whether in the ideal limit reached in the Athenian republic, where in form all the citizens voted each separate executive act, and high functionaries were appointed by lot and held office for a day, or in the gigantic plebiscites of Napoleonic audacity, or in the artless simplicity of the Swiss *referendum*—all of these are just as much unreal in fact, as they are vicious in principle. Not only would they be ruinous if they were acted on, but it is a fraud to pretend they ever could be acted upon. They are not only very bad theories of society, but they are perfectly imaginary

theories. They are false if regarded as explanations of what bodies of citizens do, and they are misleading if regarded as what citizens should do. The gift of judging what would profit a society or a state is a very rare quality of mind, the instinctive sense of what a society or a State does or can be brought to strive at, is a very rare quality of character. And it would be a paradox to maintain, that these two rare powers of mind and of character can be found combined in the first comer amongst millions of citizens. Even if they were universally present in all, they would still have in each citizen different forms, and issue in different objects. And so action would still be suspended, until the one judgment and the one form which would satisfy all could be found.

This extreme form of the democratic monomania is now hardly heard. That the infinite multiplication of unwise or moderately wise judgments can make one wise or supremely wise judgment, that aggregates of individual ignorance generate of themselves a new collective wisdom—has but little support in our day, for it has been befooled and beshowered with Homeric peals of inextinguishable mirth by our venerable Teufelsdröckh. We are fond of thinking that our own system at least is free from this sophism, that our representative apparatus evolves a collective, national wisdom in Parliament; that committees, boards, cabinets, three readings of Bills, and three estates of the Realm, correct, winnow, and eliminate the judicious from the injudicious thing. The question we seek here is rather, if this very sophism does not cling

to the smaller as much as to the larger body, if parliaments and even committees are not too often assumed to be able, to distribute their work and divide their wisdom over their whole body of members, too often to the neglect of the truth, that every collective group, large or small, can only work through personal organs; that is, round centres organically, and not atom by atom co-equally. There may be as much of the democratic dispersiveness in an assembly as in a whole nation, and it may be sometimes there is more. Parliaments and committees are often more torn by dissension than a people; they have more difficulty in evolving their organ or representative, and exhibit more obstinately the essence of anarchy, individual dogmatism. The French Assembly, which met at Bordeaux in 1871, and which has survived in a state of bootless internal conflict for years, has exhibited within itself the evils of abstract democracy in a more violent form than any nation or community of our day, more even than the communal insurrection of Paris. Indeed, nations, cities, and classes of men do often, when the mass is heated through and through, generate an organic centre for themselves with electric suddenness, whilst the heavier, more argumentative nature of the smaller councils struggles into organic action after much heaving and yearning, or even then somewhat feebly and fitfully.

For such reasons, we say that direct government is not really within the power of assemblies of any sort, large or small, any more than within that of a whole people; that assemblies run often greater danger than

nations of being paralysed by democratic dispersion; that political action, whether its source be an electoral or an elected body, can only take shape through some personal brain and nature, and *cæteris paribus* will take the best shape, when that personal organ is most free and most permanent. That is to say, the typical nature of all social government is personal government, in the true, not the special meaning of the word. If we strip off disguises and come down to the essence, there is no other kind of authority but personal authority. Even two really co-equal rulers can no more co-ordinately govern the same State in the same sphere, than two poets can make one poem, or two commanders conduct a campaign. Wherever any of these appear to be done, either they take different departments, or one virtually yields to the other, or nothing is accomplished. Much less can a community really have a hundred, a thousand, or a million co-equal rulers at once. If we look only to the efficiency of the social action, and put aside for the moment all considerations of co-operation by the community, the condition is everywhere the same in all forms of human association, viz. the maximum freedom for one directing head. In crises of every kind this truth is instinctively recognised. Where efficiency alone can save a community, common danger ensures the passionate co-operation of all, in a nation's struggle for existence, and still more in a revolution; in an army, and still more in a battle; in a ship, and still more in a wreck; the autocracy of one is a matter of course. The free command even of a moderate capacity is felt to be

better than the divided councils of a superior committee. The maximum force of a community is seen to be obtained only in centralisation. The same holds true in more normal times, though it is not so strikingly manifest. Political efficiency is everywhere identical with unity of power. Suffrages, constitutions, parliaments, and committees have other uses, but they do not contribute to the excellence of the control by a central organ.

CHAPTER VII.

PRINCIPLE OF CO-OPERATION OF THE GOVERNED.

So far as the discussion has yet gone, this may seem to be nothing but the old doctrines of Absolutism, Imperialism, and the Gospel of Drive-the-giddy-sheep-with-tooth-and-crook. Benevolent readers and unbenevolent critics will alike exclaim, that we have taken the fiery poems to the Canning or Able Man, and have done them into bare prose without the *dramatis personæ* of the great tragi-comedy. But be it remembered that we have been treating only of one side of the question, the efficiency of Government, not its representative and co-operative character. We are not defending any one of the Absolutist doctrines, all of which, even the most poetic of them, that of the Hero King, are doctrines of rights, turn on privilege, not duty, and think more of him who wields, than of those who make, the collective power. On the contrary, we do as we have said, heartily abjure the Gospel of Hero-Kingship and all its works; its apotheosis of the one, is as much repugnant to real social affection, as its distrust of the many, is opposed to true social philosophy. It is just as arbitrary and therefore as anarchical as Jacobinism itself.

Society, we said above, exhibits two co-ordinate

facts, always present in every social act. We have hitherto been looking only to one, the personal organ. We now turn to deal with the other element, the co-operation of the community.

The weight of any social force whatever is due to this, that it is a real combination of a multitude of individual forces which, if not always present in it, are always apparent in reserve. If many operations of the public authority display hardly any element of force, the reason is, that civilisation has taught even the lawless habitually to feel the force held in reserve. A mere barbarian might wonder to see, how a powerful ruffian is quietly arrested by a policeman in the midst of his desperate companions, and how criminals are condemned to prison and execution without the thought of a rescue. The policeman and the magistrate have millions of arms behind them, on all of which, if needful, they can depend. And the same thing holds good elsewhere. The subjective or potential concurrence of numbers is the secret of all social force.[1]

The habitual reference of all authority to its primitive and low type, that of mere physical command, begets in us a tendency to think of authority, as a force of compression rather than one of accumulation. In reality, even the power of a general in absolute command of an army is ultimately, not a power *over* his own soldiers, but the joint power *of* his own soldiers, articulate, as it were, and intelligent in him. In mere affairs of war, the one critical purpose is so dominant, and the nature of the effort is so simple, that the assent

[1] *Positive Polity*, vol. ii. chap. v.

of each member of the army is apt to be thought of, as a merely passive obedience, and not an active volition. But, in truth, in all kinds of human society, even in an army, government is at bottom, the co-ordination of a multitude of wills into unison, and not the suppression of many wills before one. In all the higher kinds of association, and in such industrial societies as that of modern Europe, the activities are of an infinite variety and inconceivable complication, government is almost exclusively the focus of myriads of convergent energies, the centre of gravity of a coherent mass of wills, and not a power superimposed upon the body *ab extra*. Government is thus entirely the creation of the body governed, and can be nothing but its highest working efficiency, even though, as we saw before, it be embodied in a personal centre, and in favourable cases represents the body governed at its best and by its finest element. Government may be and ought to be the best faculty in a State. But in any case, in nations such as ours, the Government can be nothing disparate to the State itself, and the individual members of it can contain nothing of a foreign sort, whether inferior or superior in nature. If the power of a ruler (we are not saying the skill of a ruler) be not the collective power of a multitude of wills dexterously attuned to one, whence does the power of a ruler come? Singly no man has any power. Even intellectual superiority is only an agent to form men's wills; it has no direct control over them; and certainly the muscular and moral power of a man, or a group of men, is nothing in comparison with that of the community, until it repre-

sents their will. If, on the other hand, we suppose that the power of a ruler is derived, not from the union of many wills in one, but from the surrender of all wills to one, the governed contributing to the Government a mere deadweight of material force, we get a picture not of a society at all, but of a slave community, such that we could expect nothing from the servile uniformity of the members. No one ever yet dreamed of seeing an effective army composed of slaves. Such an army would be driven into rout, as in the Russian story, by the whips of a band of freemen. Much less could a State even of the lowest type exist on such a basis. A society such as this would not only be incapable of anything higher than the building of a pyramid, but it would be upset the moment any portion of its slaves began to be developed into men. So that, instead of representing permanence and force, a government based on the annihilation or prostration of all wills but one, would be utterly feeble and inherently unstable.

This is the truth which is forgotten in the various theories of the Regal kind, all of which regard Authority as a new external power, giving society something unlike anything it has within it, a force *coercing* it, not an organ *evolved by* it. They are fond of imagining godlike personages of a different order from their fellow beings, using a loving force to drive men to ends which they are themselves too blind to see. The good shepherd with his colley and his crook keeps his own counsel, as, amid much barking and hard blows, he forces his silly flock into the mode of life, which

eventually elevates them into mutton. And from the point of view of the shepherd it is a beautiful picture. But as a political theory it has the defect of being merely adapted to sheep.

Beings different in kind from the society, even if any were forthcoming, would not be competent to rule; for they could only *order* and not *represent* the various forces of the community; and their very superiority, if it separated them from sympathy with the body would be a hindrance and not an advantage. As a fact, power, even in some extreme and abnormal forms, is really the associated power of a majority impersonate in one, and not the mere power which material circumstances or individual qualities may confer on that one. When we analyse apparent cases of personal tyranny we shall find that the tyranny is the force of a majority, more often the effective, than the numerical, majority, represented by the authority of one. For this reason, attacks upon an individual tyrant are so proverbially abortive. They only hit the symbol, and not the force. And even if they did succeed in hitting an organ of singular power, the force of the community, if it still remained a force, would soon find a new organ. The ruler even at his highest moment is only the dwarf upon the shoulders of the giant. It may be, that it is the eye and brain of this dwarf which alone can enable the giant to direct his steps aright; it may be that this eye and brain are of matchless quality, and cannot be replaced. But for all that the dwarf is not the giant; and without the giant as a vantage ground the dwarf would be powerless.

Hence there is something of more importance in the ruler even than high capacity, and that is close correspondence with the body he rules, without which the highest capacity would be worse than useless. Unless he truly expresses the convergence of wills he does not rule at all. Nor does this imply that he expresses some mere mechanical average of all, that he is a measure of mediocrity, as far from the best as from the worst opinion in the community, an arithmetical symbol of the mean term of the majority. The effective will of any social unit, that which will unite them in common action, is, as we all know in daily experience, a force too subtle to be expressed in any formula whatever. That which men think, that which they desire, they think and desire with the most different degrees of energy, and one energetic thought or desire has the power to carry away with it numbers without limit. It is not that their own thought or desire is extinguished by the new; it is expanded and vitalised in the new, sometimes becoming lower, more often higher, in quality, but always gaining fresh precision and stability. It is needless to analyse further, and it is hardly possible to analyse at all, this subtle process, with which we all are so familiar in practice, how the wishes of bodies of men become incarnate, as it were, in one typical will to which they give strength; whilst, in turn, it infuses into them its own elevation and intensity.

The secret of those who possess this faculty in high degree is very distinct from bare intellectual vision, it resides much more in sympathy of nature and breadth

of moral tact. In one sense it is with all its works at the opposite pole to the speculative power, which, in its abstract form at least, so long as it can retain the thread of the higher thought of ages, works most potently when detached from contemporary activity about it. To the man of action, the activity of those about him is at once the atmosphere he needs for breath and life, the *pabulum* of all his ideas, the object of all his labours; and without it he is not only deprived of his principal function, but is reduced to a mere schemer.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUFFRAGE.

If power over men be only the representation of men, and not the forcible control over them, at least in modern industrial societies, what, then, are parliaments, elections, and the like? Is there no such thing as government by representatives, or by popular votes, no constitutional government at all? What is the value of the Suffrage? The answer would appear to be, that these institutions one and all, and every other offspring of the Suffrage, are first, a more or less complex machinery for discovering, and then for registering opinions; but are not *per se* direct means of governing or a source of government. There are cases where the state of public opinion in a commonwealth is so easy for a ruler to ascertain, and the fact of his representing it is so capable of demonstration to all the world, that no machinery whatever is required either for discovery or for sanction. During the latter part of his Presidency, Abraham Lincoln represented the effective will of the Northern States, and was recognised as its expression so completely, that no elective machinery whatever could have done anything, either to enlighten him as to what that effective will in its broad features was, or to invest him with more formal au-

thority as its exponent. On the contrary, almost any suffragial machinery would only have tended to embarrass him; on the one hand, by suggesting crudely the opinions of casual majorities more or less artificially concocted; on the other hand, by diverting attention from the effective to the numerical force of the nation. In cases not quite so simple as that of the American civil war it is no easy thing, either to learn what the nation desires, or to prove that any person or policy adequately represents its desire. And it is to meet this want, that all the subtlety and ingenuity of modern times has been exhausted in devising various forms of apparatus, wherewith to focus the national will in the first place, and then to legalise the authority which expresses it. Where public opinion is irregularly formed and becomes articulate with difficulty, apparatus of this kind is indispensable; but the progress of material appliances diminishes at each step this difficulty until, in a life amply provided with communication such as ours, the apparatus often gets hopelessly behindhand, and even misleads instead of informing us. In truth, the interchange of thoughts is in our day so complete, and the elasticity and multiplicity of public opinion is so vast, that any mechanical method of distilling it into an essence must be illusory. All political machinery of the kind has this double defect. In the first place, it can evolve nothing but the crude numerical symbol of a highly spiritual force; in the second, it is liable to be disorganised by innate depravation or artificial perversion. All comitial schemes whatever are liable to maladies of electioneering, mala-

dies of infinite variety and subtlety, whereby the machine which is to express opinion is distorted so as to make it utter something quite different. In the classical land of elections 'caucusing' has become an art of astonishing potency and elaboration; so much so, that in spite of many noble examples of political worth, the word 'a politician' vulgarly implies a professional intriguer. And as civilisation advances and the arts of communication become developed, the facilities of electioneering grow, so that, just as elective machinery becomes less necessary as a means of manifesting opinion rightly, it becomes more liable to express it falsely.

The Suffrage is so important a part of all popular notions in politics, and in all our thoughts about it we are so deeply influenced by habit and so far from theoretic analysis, that it may be useful to work out a few plain truths about the Suffrage in principle, even though they are obvious enough to sound like truism.

Reflection will show us the following qualities inherent in the Suffrage pure and simple:

1. *It is a power of veto or selection, not a power of initiation.*

2. *It is an enumeration of opinions, not a measure of forces.*

3. *It gives the average, not the best, opinion.*

4. *It is liable to be artificially falsified in the working.*

To consider each of these in detail:

Proposition 1.—The world has got so much accustomed to regard voting as a method of freely eliciting the independent opinions of each individual in a community, that we are apt to forget how completely a figure of speech this is. In the first place, almost everything depends on the authority which takes the vote, that is, which proposes the question. When a city or a nation votes, it does not really express its opinion upon what ought to be done, but it gives or withholds its assent to a man, or to a party which proposes something to be done or not to be done. And the critical point always is, *who is it that proposes, and what is proposed?* This has been already decided before the voting begins by those who 'hold the election.' It cannot be otherwise. If 10,000 citizens without concert were privately to write down their separate opinions on question of State policy, and silently to deposit the papers in a ballot box, then and only then would the individual voice of each citizen be freely evoked. But as the result, though it might be the only pure type of democracy, would be somewhat as if all the newspapers of the civilised world were tossed into a vast pyramid, very little could be made of it. In fact, no voting can begin until the free expression of individual opinions is forborne, and some single narrow issue—yes or no—A or B—has been chosen by some authority (that is ultimately by some man), and has been accepted as the issue at stake. Assemblies casually collected under excitement, and this especially when they consist of educated people, amusingly illustrate how impossible it is to vote anything without

a recognised authority to determine what shall be voted upon. Hundreds of able persons stormily propose a hundred questions with striking ability, and after all they storm in vain. To take a vote at all there must be a government to propose some question, or a party to propose some man, or nothing is done. The history of plebiscites may instruct us how easily any result is obtained by any one, who at the moment commands the only important point in the process—the power to frame the question of appeal.

When Suffrages are cast not for a policy but for a representative, and when, theoretically every citizen is free to propose himself or his neighbour, it may seem at first sight that the vote is the expression of individual opinion. We know, however, that in practice it is not so; that there can be no voting until candidates are reduced to one or two groups, that is to say, until the ascendency of two or three leading characters or knots of men has been accepted by the rest. It is difficult to conceive how few may be the persons who really do often force a candidate on a constituency: very often it is a single person, not himself even a voter. Elections, even under our system of local dispersion and class segregation, never exhibit the true choice of the electors, but only the policy, party, or personality, which forces its way to the front and gets accepted. About every candidate there is more or less of the *pis aller*; usually he is little else but an embodied *pis aller*; he is not the man whom his supporters individually choose, but the man whom they collectively accept. If we take even so complex and

accidental a process as an election in England, we find something of this kind occurs: some small knot of political notabilities in the constituency, of course itself directed more or less unconsciously by a single notable, and he, it may be, at a distance, proposes and at length imposes a candidate, and gets him accepted by their party; the candidate does not profess any policy of which he is the author, but that which his party accepts; the party, again, does not elaborate its own party, because a party as such can have no policy except such as it accepts from its leaders; its leaders, again, have no policy but what their own secret or avowed chiefs may propound. And thus, if Mr. Gladstone in the silence of his study conceives a scheme for disestablishing the Church in Ireland, his followers accept it as a programme, the Liberal party adopts his followers and his programme, Liberal candidates repeat more or less willingly, more or less intelligently, the watchword of their party, the local managers retail the views of their party, the constituencies believe the local managers, and within a few months of the hour when the great truth was borne in upon Mr. Gladstone, politicians will be toiling for an end, to which, till that hour, one half of them were more than indifferent; candidates will be pledging themselves to support a measure which many of them barely understand, and some of them almost detest; and millions of quiet citizens will be sacrificing time, money, and peace, shouting themselves hoarse, and here and there breaking each other's heads, in order to do something (not yet resolved upon) to an Institution of which many of

them never before heard, for the sake of an end which, till now, few of them heartily promoted.

I guard myself here from misconstruction. I am far from disparaging the Liberal party or its leader, or the policy in question. Precisely the same thing results when Mr. Disraeli in his study determines to bring in a Reform Bill; the Conservative party acts just like the Liberal party; and if they ever do take heart to commit themselves to any great measure again, precisely the same process would be gone through. As to the design of Irish Disestablishment, it was, I emphatically repeat, a wise and just measure; its adoption as a policy did honour to the party and the man who made it a national question; and the tone of the nation which accepted it from them was thereby elevated and improved. Still less would I suggest that the measure was dictated to the party or to the nation, or was in any way the result of anything but deliberate and even enthusiastic decision of the majority. Mr. Gladstone's project was not the cause but the occasion. The majority and the party were in a condition to adopt such a policy, and they adopted it vehemently, when proposed by a statesman in close correspondence with the prevalent temper of his time. Mr. Gladstone was but the nucleus of a floating body of opinion, long gathering and still to gather round such questions; the purpose which a generation or two had held in solution rapidly crystallised around the point presented by his initiative, and the whole movement followed, the national will taking form in the energy of one representative brain.

This illustration forcibly points to the truth that in every free elective process, and at every stage of it, a real power of *veto* exists; that any initiative of an uncongenial kind, addressed to a community not prepared for it, is ejected and not assimilated. On the other hand, it is equally true that the initiating organ may be a very poor organ in itself, constantly changing within and constantly changed from without. Thus, any group of active politicians will be directed only by the influence which at the time possesses their confidence; a party or a constituency will refuse 'to be dictated to,' and finds another candidate more in harmony with it; and a nation, as we saw the other day, will give surprising answers to those who appeal to it too confidently. And it is also quite a different thing to be able to say, who is at any moment the particular organ of a party or of the national will. We may be able to show that it is always somewhere in a personal form, though the actual person may be difficult to detect. But difficulty in perceiving the organ must not lead us into denying its existence. On every side we may see proofs of the truth that the suffrage is a method of ratification, a means of giving formal adoption to measures and men already widely accepted, but it is not a means whereby measures or men are evolved out of the free initiative of the voting body. A vote can give authority to a policy or to a statesman. It cannot originate a policy or produce a statesman. And the essential character of every decision by vote is determined by those who settle the question to be submitted to the voters.

Proposition 2.—Such is the first corrective we must make to the notion, that a vote is the absolutely free expression of individual opinions. Its really important feature is decided, not by those who give, but by those who take the vote. But there are other correctives to be considered besides. A vote professes to be the formal register of the will, or opinion, of each individual who votes. It is called the gauge, or measure of the body voting, and parliaments are called the mirror of the nation. But as a measure, or as a mirror, every system of voting has this immense defect; the gauge or the reflector is homogeneous and takes no account of degrees, whilst the thing measured or to be reflected is made up of degrees and is highly heterogeneous. Votes are exactly equivalent, in secret voting absolutely so; of 10,000 ballot papers each one is of exactly the same value as every other. But the will or opinion registered in each paper differs enormously; no two are of exactly the same value; one represents a great force, another represents mere helplessness or mere chance. It is an old sarcasm that the vote of the wisest and the vote of the silliest member of the community stand each alike for one. But this is the least part of the anomaly, because a vote professes to express the will of the body voting, not so much its wisdom. But, in fact, in no degree can it be said to express its effective will. For in every way in which we can regard them, the wills of different persons mean totally different forces. One man scarcely has a will; his feeble impulses at most take shape in a doubtful preference. Another man has a will before which that of

thousands yields. We never in practical life regard men as having equal force of nature, nor do we account vague tendencies as equivalent to resolves. It is the same with opinions. The opinion of one man is a thoughtless fancy, of another it is a reasoned conviction. In practical affairs we allow for all this. If we are dealing with a body of people, we pay more regard to the vehement will and solid convictions of ten, often even of one, than to the shapeless impressions of 100 or even 1,000. We value the former and neglect the latter; we know that the former is a force and the latter is not; and we assume that in time, or whenever strength is tested, the former will carry its point. Wherever men meet, in politics, in business, or in society, we assume as a matter of course, that the leading wills and the solid beliefs outweigh the rest. In any way in which forces can be tested, we find this result, and we expect to find it; the collective action of any community, be it club, association, constituency, city, nation, will be determined by those members who relatively to the rest are, not the cleverest or the best, but the strongest and the most tenacious of their own aims, and most apt to lead others to their aims. And we should all be ruined publicly and privately if we neglected this truth. But this is precisely what votes as such can never indicate for us. Of 10,000 votes each is exactly equivalent. How many express courageous will and indomitable persistence; how many express habit, accident, irresolution, or indifference, we can never know; nor are we informed how many express ignorance, prejudice, and thoughtlessness,

and how many the mature conviction of knowledge. Yet these are precisely the facts we need to know, if we are to measure the forces which the voting body possesses, if the vote is to be a real test of the balance of forces, and not an enumeration of heads. If of two armies of the field we simply counted their muster rolls, and neglected to consider their relative powers of collective action, what should we know? We might suppose 500 men of the Black Watch no more than the match of 500 Ashantees. Just so, if without weighing, we crudely register the votes of 10,000 citizens in a community, we shall be glaringly misled as to what these very citizens will really desire, and will actually do, when the time for action arrives. If we want to learn what they will really do and what they practically want, we must weigh the relative force of their opinions and not count their number. Yet votes can only count heads.

So great is the defect of every suffragial contrivance as being a fixed mechanical expression for a mobile force, so enormous is the difference between political forces truly weighed and votes crudely registered, that no one would ever have resorted to the expedient of voting at all, but for one practical use of it. As a matter of fact voting, as practised, usually does give us a rough estimate of political forces, whilst we can prove distinctly that in theory no mere voting can give any, even approximate, measure of force. How is this? The reason, no doubt, is that whilst mere or cold individual voting can give no measure of force, in practice the electoral contest that precedes the voting has really

balanced and tested the forces, so that the poll is the bare register of a result previously attained and usually already manifest. The will and opinions of each voter have been modified by the leading natures and minds about him, and thus the poll comes near to expressing roughly, how the forces would be distributed when it came to action. The electoral contest has been a rehearsal or trial of an actual contest. It bears the same relation to a civil war that a sham fight does to a battle. The forces on both sides have displayed some of the qualities, and in some degree shewn the relative weakness and strength they would shew, if they had decided the question in a real appeal to force. But then it is the election agitation and contest, not the election, which has shown the balance, and if there were no election agitation, the election would show nothing of the true distribution of force; whilst, where the agitation has run its fair course, an actual poll is hardly needed to indicate where the forces lie. The votes, in fact, of 10,000 persons, voting individually as units, will present an utterly different result to the votes of the same 10,000 persons voting organically, as a community in a contest. In the one case we shall have 10,000 opinions, without any means of judging which of the number express force and which express feebleness; in the other case, if a full and free political agitation has been possible, the forces will already have proved their relative strength by modifying the votes. If we silently ask 10,000 persons for their views, and register their answers, we get a product which is perfectly useless, for it gives us no clue to know what those

persons as a political body will in action desire, do, and suffer to be done. If we give them full scope for political movement, that is let them collectively fight out a particular question, and then take the votes as of an organic force, we may perhaps get a rough measure of their will, but we shall have got it for most practical purposes before the voting begins. It is the 'turmoil of the election contest,' not the election, which really indicates political forces.

It is on this ground that all plans for a discriminating franchise, for minority suffrages, 'fancy franchises,' and above all 'personal representation,' are in my judgment pre-eminently futile. In one way or other, all of them eliminate from the voting process and from the result of the vote, just that one feature, the agitation and contest in the collective body, with its verdict of practical force, which gives to the voting process any reality at all. Personal representation collects the scattered votes of units, who do not and cannot act together politically, for they are widely separate in space, and do not even know each other. For these reasons they have no collective or organic energy, and consequently are not political forces. They may be musters of highly intelligent persons, but the more intelligent the more likely they are to diverge in opinion. It would be as wise to assure us that the only way for an orchestra to render true music is for the various players to perform separately their own favourite composition. The result of the vote might give us a mine of valuable views, an inexhaustible 'bluebook;' but it would not give us force, or any

other ponderable political energy. It would give us a catalogue of opinions, without the one thing, the previous collective agitation, which can make votes instructive and correspond to realities. The members (say) for Birmingham are citizens of no mean city, who roughly express the collective will and temper of a political aggregate of men with all the following conditions. They are capable of acting together politically; they are capable of acting on the whole series of national questions; and lastly they are a real force habitually affecting our national policy (a force which once resolved to march visible in arms upon London). Now for purposes of national government, and the direction of actual power, we need to get at the real forces, not the metaphysical forces, we need something to measure those forces, which act not on details, but on the whole sum of national considerations. But the personal representatives of (say) the Contagious-Diseases-Acts Abolitionists would express at most a very vehement opinion on a detail of army administration; but would represent no political aggregate capable of entering into the daily and organic life of our nation as a whole; and on every topic of national interest such representatives might be buffoons or busybodies. They would be nominees of a casual list of men and women who, apart from this special grievance, had nothing to bind them together, no means of joint political action (except *ad hoc*), no force (except as obstructives), and no *raison d'être*, beyond the lofty principle they profess. It is quite true that their opinions, and by every sign they are opinions of intense earnestness, ought to be heard in political life. But

are they not heard as it is? If the believers in every cause, big or little, were entitled each to a few representatives of their own, every free citizen had better be his own member at once according to the Arcadian plan of Zurich; and we may meet all difficulties as to representation by a perpetual application of the Swiss referendum. The fallacy of personal representation consists in the enormous assumption that electors think; that they know what they think; and that they know whom they would choose to represent their thoughts. It is mere hallucination which supposes that masses of average citizens have a tabulated scheme of political views, and keep ready-made lists of the public characters who exactly reflect their minds. Academic essayists and political logicians may do something of the kind; but nothing can be more alien to the actual facts about ordinary Englishmen. Even cultivated men in an active political contest could hardly name more than a dozen candidates with whom they actively agree; and if the average elector, after twenty public meetings, tavern discussions, and torrents of newspaper articles, can make up his mind honestly that he thinks A would make a better parliament-man than B, the average elector has done quite as much as we can expect. But in order to do this he will need, and he ought to have, the rivals A and B engaged in public contest under his eye, that he may watch how each of them deals with men in organic masses. This is political life; but writing on a paper names of persons whom you never saw, is more like the voting for candidates at a club or a charity. In practice, personal representation could result only in

the triumph of confederacies or of cliques. It may possibly be the carrying out of a principle, it has been said, 'to almost ideal perfection;' but in the idealism all reality disappears. It is a masterpiece of that Nephelo-coccygic wisdom in which the ingenious reformer goes out of his way to show mankind how *not-to-do-it*, and it would realise the hypothesis just stated, that of taking suffrages silently and individually, which is the *reductio ad absurdum* of all voting. If the object of voting be to discover, not where political force may be found, but where it certainly cannot be found, if the representatives of a constituency are to represent, not the wills of political aggregates, but a heap of heterogeneous projects, if our aim is not to measure the force of the citizens, but to form a museum of crotchets, where the schemes of all the cliques, pedants, and fanatics in the community may be collected and preserved like a wax-work show—we may find what we seek in Personal Representation. The scheme is a monument of the length to which inveterate habits of syllogising in the air can carry acutely argumentative minds, parading with drums and colours along the broad and trampled highway that leads to the great region of—Nowhere.[1]

Proposition 3.—With the third qualification to the

[1] I do not consider the new project of Proportional Representation, for the following reasons:—So far as it is a scheme for redistribution of power—and it clearly is this on the largest scale—it is wholly beside my present purpose. It is a matter full of difficulty to decide what precise effect this proposed Redistribution might have. So far as the new Bill embodies, and is akin to, personal representation, so far I think it would fall under the criticism contained above.

Suffrage as the ultimate Sovereign power, we need not be long detained. Since the days of Moses and Aaron, wit and experience have exhausted their arts in decrying the unwisdom of the many, their proneness to set up vain men as their chosen leaders in place of the appointed ruler, and the ignorance and presumption of mere democracy. We need not occupy ourselves with this objection, because, as was just now said, it is common to reply that the end of voting is to express the aggregate will of the voters, and not to elicit the wisdom to be found amongst them. There is, however, another partial reply to the veteran sarcasm about the voices 'of thirty millions mostly fools,' and that is, that in voting as we are used to it, the advice of those who are thought worthy of giving advice has been very abundantly offered, and in some sense has been previously taken, so that what practical wisdom exists in a body of electors or is capable of influencing them (practical wisdom is not political wisdom unless it *can* influence men) has already made its mark by effecting the votes. In this way, after a thorough and free development of opinion, the practical mass is often leavened by its abler minds; and a rough expression of the best current ideas is in practice obtained. But this is as much as to say, that the best uses of the Suffrage only result where the ascendency of the best men begins to be accepted, and the will and opinion of the individual voters is *pro tanto* surrendered, which is the authoritative rather than the democratic theory. And even this must be qualified by the proviso, that it is only in favourable cases that

this happy influence of intelligence over the voting mass will result, that happy state of things when noisy unwisdom is unable to thrive, and unselfish sense can make itself heard and respected. There are classes and communities of which this is fairly true. And of them it may be said that suffrages *give evidence* of the better opinion of the community, though they do nothing to *form* it. The general result is, that the true use of voting is the ratification, not the formation of a political authority. Although satire has grown commonplace in exposing the impossibility of ever evolving wisdom by any contrivance of voting, that satire has never been answered, nor is it ever likely to be answered.

Proposition 4.—Lastly, the usefulness of the voting process, even as an instrument of ratification by public opinion, is unfortunately much diminished, by an incident to which every known scheme of voting is more or less exposed. The moment any machinery is required to appeal to the voters, and in every complex and large society some machinery is required, skill in using the machinery acquires so important a place as very often to outweigh every other fact; and the result is determined, not by the influence of eminent character, not by the real wishes of the voters, but by the technical mastery of those who work the canvassing apparatus. This is an incident of every method in which voting bodies can be appealed to, and the more complex the body, and the more elaborate the voting apparatus, the more important becomes skill in managing the apparatus. Where the electing body is very small and

very heterogeneous, as in an English 'family borough,' electioneering skill, wealth, and influence, usually work through channels too secret to detect by any care, and too subtle to prevent by any law. Where the body of electors, as in a French department, is almost homogeneous and under official discipline, pressure can be directed upon them scientifically and on a grand scale. Where the electing body, as in an English or American city, is both huge and unorganised, it can only be reached by expedients which develop special ingenuity and usually demand immense resources. And the more elaborate the conditions of the suffrage are made, the more will expedients and resources tell on the result. Fiction, journalism, and election petitions have made us all familiar enough with the incredible proportions to which have grown the arts of 'caucusing,' 'wire-pulling,' 'jerrymandering,' and the various resources of the political manager, of which the names may be exotic, whilst the things are indigenous. As we all know, these arts have developed a special profession equal at least in acuteness and versatility to any profession of our day. The immortal exploits of 'Men in the Moon' and other 'gentlemen from the —— Club' are believed to belong to our Ante-Reform era; but the enormous influence of the 'agent' is most conspicuous, when men of undoubted reputation work a constituency on strictly legal methods. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that to secure a first-rate 'agent' in a contested election is of more vital necessity than to secure a first-rate jockey in a horse race. A really eminent 'agent,' who receives 'carte blanche' with no

instructions except to add two letters to the style and address of his client, is almost certain, as we know, to win for him a seat in parliament, and that without violating law. When a general election is held, what the issue may be depends more on some score or two of accomplished agents, whose names are known to no one but candidates, than on the great leaders of the various parties; and grand manifestoes of ministers are oftener due to the councils of professional agents than to those of responsible statesmen. It will probably be found that Mr. Disraeli in designing his Reform Acts owed his immense superiority in accurate forecast of their results—a superiority he alone had, not only over the whole of the opposing parties, but over every member of his own party—not more to his own genius, than to his having relied on the minute and accurate information as to electioneering secrets supplied to him by consummate adepts. His opponents of one school or other relied on theories and dogmas about the Suffrage. Having coolly, like von Moltke, weighed these masses of accurate survey into the dispositions of the enemy who were making heroic addresses, Mr. Disraeli was able to defeat them, as easily as the Prussian strategist outmanœuvred Garibaldi's magnanimous followers. That the all-important 'agent' does not more often and more distinctly make and unmake governments is only, because on most occasions he is to be found evenly distributed in both camps; but if any party could secure every professional agent and experienced electioneerer in the country to its own side, the contest would be like a battle between

disciplined troops and an untrained militia, and it would probably make a difference in the House of Commons of at least 100 votes.

But if all forms of voting of necessity invest with great influence mere technical skill in working the election machinery, it does not follow, as some profound cynics would have it, that there is no use at all in voting, and that all elections are matters of brokerage or trade. It is not to be forgotten that skill in securing a seat is itself a form of political force. The energy and discipline of the party which carries an election is the result of some kind of conviction and desire, and it is very much the same energy and discipline which would secure that party an ascendency, of whatever kind the political struggle might be. Putting aside mere cases of surprise, fraud, or open bargain, the election secured by vigorous electioneering represents a real force, which would in all cases carry the community with it; and if we often see a mere cypher returned by the force of wealth or position, we may remember that wealth and position are forces, which do often at present secure to a cypher both solid advantages and real power. If, therefore, an election conforms to the same rule, the election only reflects the actual distribution of forces, and though it adds nothing to the State in the way of political wisdom, it tells us much that is useful as to the balance of political weight.

Many of the defects natural to the voting process in all its forms are somewhat reduced or corrected by the part played by the suffrage in our own system.

The voters are called on to elect persons, not to vote upon policies; the elected are representatives, not delegates; for the most part they obtain their success at the poll by reason of their recognised influence, and do not obtain influence simply by their success at the poll. The unwritten rules of the constitution and the prejudices of party tradition, the feeling against direct appeals to the nation, against new popular favourites and against limiting the discretion of the representative, all increase the tendency to treat the election as the acceptance of a personal governor rather than as a direct exercise of governing authority. So far our practice is a distinct derogation from the logical consequences of voting, and from the abstract integrity of the suffrage. And our democratic party are consistent in attacking, and our conservative party are consistent in defending, this qualified use of the suffrage as the public adoption of men rather than the direct initiation of measures. The 'Americanising' of our institutions, which is so much feared, would no doubt involve a much stricter use of the suffrage as an engine of government; but it would intensify nearly all the defects which we have just asserted to belong to the suffrage in principle. So long as elections are held at long intervals, are held exclusively to choose representatives not to pass plebiscites, and whilst the representatives enjoy almost unlimited discretion, the multiform changing forces of the constituency can be reflected in an organic, and not in a mechanical way, through the mind of a representative as the deputed organ of public opinion. It cannot be denied that in thus relying for

long periods upon a personal interpreter of the general voices, instead of having recourse to the suffrage continually to declare it, in thus leaving the representative free during those periods to go counter to the general voice, with no machinery either for recalling his commission or for imposing upon him an 'imperative mandate,' our system practically discards the theory that the Suffrage is the real engine of government, and is throwing itself more into the theory of personal Authority. And then the question presents itself, if this formal election of a multitude of official mouthpieces of public opinion does not often obscure, retard, and distort the true expression of public opinion, which the statesman of insight could measure much more truly for himself by direct but informal ways?

When the method of electing representatives practically becomes a means of electing a government, the original vice of every form of election comes into special prominence. Theory can never make good the claim of the governed, that is of the inferior, to choose the governor, that is the superior. And they, who contend that in practice it can be done successfully, must not forget how completely the process of selecting a government is usually disguised, and how very seldom any body of voters freely select a government to rule them, or do more than accept the government which offers itself to them. So far as they really select or set up a rule of their own independent motion, they are forming what must of necessity be an average or mediocre government, very much short of the best. So far as they are adopting that organ of government

which comes out as the natural centre of the common life they tend to establish a high class and efficient government; but then *pro tanto* they are derogating from the high prerogative of the democratic Suffrage.

We may therefore sum up these several features of the Suffrage thus:—

By no kind of Suffrage apparatus in strict theory can government be directly carried on, or even be permanently inspired. By no kind of Suffrage apparatus can a personal organ of government be created, or even directed. By no kind of Suffrage apparatus can governing efficiency be produced that was not already active in the community, nor even be invested with ascendency if it has no ascendency before. That is to say, the Suffrage cannot give us the first of our two elements of government, the governing organ; nay, it can hardly give efficiency to the governing organ, though it may do very much to diminish its efficiency. The real part of the Suffrage entirely belongs to the second element in government—the co-operation of the governed. In this its function is rather declaratory than formative. It does not discover the will of the community, but it registers it on authority. Thus, where this will is so far balanced as to be doubtful, where its numerical expression is the only appeal to which men will submit, the suffrage is the only issue from a deadlock short of civil war; and not only may be a useful, but it is an indispensable expedient. By it in favourable instances the co-operation of the community governed may be disciplined, and, as it were,

organised into a real, though a concurrent, source of authority; and though the personal organ of government can neither be created by the suffrage nor invested with ascendency *ab initio*, still, where a personal organ is already found and already has made its ascendency felt, the suffrage can add a new meaning to the personal force by investing it with formal authority, and may give an enormous extension to an already latent ascendency. But this is only to say that it is a machinery whereby public opinion takes form and definite expression. And as such, not only can it add nothing to the force of public opinion nor go beyond it or transcend it, but it is liable to defects and shortcomings, to which a true estimate of public opinion is hardly exposed, by virtue of the fact that the Suffrage is a complex piece of mechanism, admitting of countless failures and aberrations, through accidental error, and deliberate distortion in the working of the apparatus.

CHAPTER IX.

RESPONSIBLE APPOINTMENT.

It seems to me important, when discussing the theory of politics, that we should keep in view these defects in the very essence of all elective machinery, even where we recognise the degree to which its use is established as a second nature, and also the present impossibility of replacing it. I have not attempted to make, what in this country at least is to my mind utterly futile, any crude proposal for giving up our system of electing to political office, much less any yet more crude proposal for a new political apparatus. All the schemes for improving the machinery of the suffrage (and I do not except the Ballot, voting-papers, three-corner constituencies, female suffrage, and every 'fancy' whatsoever of the kind) seem to me to labour under the double defect, first, that they aim at giving a theoretical improvement to that which is inherently fallacious in itself, secondly, that they introduce changes which are thoroughly changes for the worse. These improvements, as they are called, are irresistible indications, I think, of a growing sense that our suffrage theory is unsound. Nothing, I admit, can be stronger than the positive arguments so trenchantly urged in favour of nearly every one of these new projects. If the task before them were only to make

out their special case, it must be held that every one of these schools of reform have triumphantly established their own. Nothing can be more cruel and more degrading to the public, than those evils of coercion, for which the Ballot was proposed. Representation of minorities has in *logic* a tremendous case. The arguments for personal representation establish the most glaring vices in the present system. Nor do I doubt that a large number of women are as competent to vote as masses of actual electors. Every one of these parties have proved, at least to my satisfaction, defects and inconsistencies of the most glaring kind in the Suffrage, as we know it. I cannot agree, notwithstanding, that their claims should be admitted. In politics we must ever distrust logic, and look at results organically and always as a whole. On the balance, would the State be better for these changes? I think not. What their advocates have proved is, that the Suffrage is based on an insoluble fallacy, which no amendment can make rational. The Suffrage, it appears to me, is at present at least an unavoidable necessity; and the less we think of ideal improvements, the greater may be its provisional usefulness. Whilst disclaiming any arbitrary attempts to secure these ends at all costs, our only aim should be to make the Suffrage as far as possible general, as far as possible uniform, and to the last point simple in application.

On the ground of the special conditions and history of English political life, I have not examined at length, what is undoubtedly the most characteristic, and I think the most important, of the political axioms of

Comte. From the point of view of political theory he condemns the Suffrage altogether, as an engine for creating Authority, on the double ground, first, that it implies the appointment of the superior by the inferior; secondly, that it hands over to numbers that which is the function of a competent organ. Consequently he substitutes the principle of direct nomination of the inferior by the superior to every public duty, in the last resort the outgoing holder of office nominating his own successor. It is not my purpose here (and it would require a volume to itself) to work out this theory in its proper applications; especially as it applies to the Executive not the Legislative side of politics. It may easily be supposed that no reasonable man would have proposed it, unless with a multitude of surrounding conditions and corollaries, without which it is impossible, or utterly evil. The actual arrangement he conceives as befitting the normal state of society is this:—That public appointments should be made on the sole authority of those to whom directly or indirectly the holder of the office is subordinate; that the nomination should be at first provisional and subject to approval, for a definite period; that during that period public opinion should consider the nomination, express its approval, or in extreme cases its repudiation of the nominee; again not by voting, but by a personal organ of expression. For the highest function the holder would be required to nominate for public approval his own successor in his lifetime, gradually associating him, and giving a trial of his powers, in the work of government. It

will be understood that this normal state of things implies (1) a pure Republic and no hereditary privileges of any kind, (2) much smaller political societies, (3) an habitual sense of religious duty in governed and governor, (4) no standing armies, (5) an immense development of the power and intelligence of the people, and (6) a religious body actively concerning itself with practical life. I do not enlarge on this subject for two reasons, first, that it would need a volume to explain it adequately; secondly, that it belongs to an ideal state of society, wholly outside of practical questions. But I have thought that candour demanded some notice of what is undoubtedly the most distinctive of Comte's political doctrines. If one asks, how is it to begin, we ask how the world or the Constitution began.

As I have not now the opportunity of meeting all the obvious objections, I place myself under a considerable disadvantage in stating, as a general principle, what, without long explanation, can hardly seem otherwise than crude. I will simply ask the reader to remember that the accidents of our English world do not make a general principle less true, because we do not see our way to reducing it instantly to practice. It must be remembered that this principle forms part of a whole, the aim of which is, a religious, moral, intellectual, and industrial reorganisation of society; that its acceptance would imply the acceptance of new education, new ideas of duty, new habits of life, and new institutions. I will say nothing more upon the principle but this: that any scheme of electing governments by

the governed necessarily implies the selection to the most arduous tasks by a majority of those who can know little about it. Our grandest disquisitions on the wisdom of representative government can never displace this preliminary truth. Nor have they shaken one stone of the position, that the selecting of fit men to fill public duties is one of the highest attributes of governing genius, and one which the average citizen is of necessity but poorly qualified to perform. In all the associations of life we recognise and act upon this principle. To use our constant illustration (and the immediate risk of destruction and death has a potent use in dispersing cant, prejudice, and sophistry), no army could exist which elected its own officers, or ship, of which the captain was elected by his crew. In industrial life none but socialists propose that a business or a mill should be managed by universal suffrage; and even where in companies the vote is retained in theory, in practice we know it is formal or unimportant. In every department of practical life, but one, we recognise the principle that the ruler cannot safely be appointed by the votes of those whom he rules, and to reject this principle is to destroy the basis of property. In things political, for the public government of states or communities, the dangers of violent abuse of power have driven us to accept a widely different principle. And although it is plain that this inversion of the source of Power, and the triumph of the Suffrage, have won results to freedom which could not have been dispensed with, it does not follow but that in a future stage of society we may be able to resort to the true

and healthier principle. It would seem that in struggling for the recognition of popular consent and of Public Opinion, we have consecrated as the sole source of Authority that which is only the sanction and complement of Authority. But to resort to the ancient and true source of competent government, several conditions (unhappily far from attained) are previously indispensable. In the first place, the sense of public duty in every office, public or private, must have habitually superseded the dictates of personal ambition. In the second place, society must be in such a condition that the fulfilment of duties has practically superseded the assertion of rights. In the third place, public opinion must be sufficiently strong to destroy the possibility of despotism. Lastly, there must be institutions capable of correcting any probable abuse of power. When all these conditions were present, it would be found possible that the appointment to public offices might safely be entrusted to the same persons to whom the holders of the offices are actually responsible:—provided it were done (1) with ample publicity, (2) with a provisional or probationary interval, and (3) subject to public acceptance. Such in fact is the spirit of systems upon which great and glorious communities have lived, and conspicuously that which is perhaps the brightest epoch in the entire history of government, the Roman Empire under the age of the Antonines. Nay it must not be forgotten that at present this principle of personal appointment, with a few recent and petty exceptions, is the sole principle which is known to the theory of our Constitution, in

every sphere but that of the Parliamentary franchise. But though, in theory, the principle of appointing to public office by responsible authority is dominant, and the counter theory belongs only to a single element in the Constitution, in practice our habit is tending to regard no Sovereignty as legitimate save that which rests upon Suffrage. Although our society is far from being prepared to dispense with the Suffrage in practice, and is scarcely prepared to discuss its defects as a theory, there remains the principle, indefeasible and applicable to every human community, that the true source of all efficient government is *direct nomination by a competent authority, responsible to public opinion, and under the sanction of public approval.*

CHAPTER X.

PUBLIC OPINION.

If the intelligence or mind of all government depends upon the person who is its organ, on the other hand, the volume and force of all government depends on its expressing Public Opinion. Our criticism of the Suffrage has turned entirely on this:—not because it represents Public Opinion so well, but because it represents it so imperfectly. It is on the full development and organisation of opinion that the future of republican institutions depends. We have already so often insisted on the part played by co-operation in every social force, and it is so completely bound up with all our ideas of civilisation, that it is needless to enlarge on this the most obvious of all political truths. The consensus of the society in the work of Government is no cold assent or indifferent submission; it implies a positive and vigorous collaboration on the part of the mass. To all the familiar yet indispensable commonplaces as to the consent of the people and unlimited freedom of speech we will give a hearty welcome; and, having done so, leave them as beyond the need of illustration or defence. It was indeed a perverse attempt, that of rehabilitating the principle of Authority by denouncing the no less indispensable principle of Public Co-operation, and even

by disparaging the liberty of Opinion. A far simpler and easier solution lies open to us in the combination of the two principles, in making Authority the leader, but not the mouthpiece of Opinion, and freedom of speech the inspirer but not the master of Authority.

The truth which at present would seem the most in need of attention, is the subtle and complex nature of the force we call Public Opinion. We are too apt to regard the opinions of a group of persons as a series of so many definite propositions, capable of being arranged in so many classes, and there likely to remain in permanent proportion. If we put a hundred witnesses in the witness-box, or a hundred students in an examination, we can extract a hundred views (*valeant quantum*) of a definite kind upon any subject of inquiry; and they will be such as can be classified in groups of opinion. But the action of a political community endowed with political life is something essentially different. With them the opinion will tend from the first to be more or less con-joint, or organic; there will, in fact, be nothing that can be really called opinion in the majority, until combination and political agitation have begun, and have welded a more or less collective opinion. Till this has been done, the attempt to wring out substantive opinions from every member will be illusory and quite artificial. Masses unendowed with political life, or deprived of liberty of speech, if forced to expression of opinions, can only act from indifference or subserviency. But when full political development exists with real liberty of mind, an organic outgrowth of public opinion results, with modes of action curiously

difficult to calculate, and of singular elasticity and mobility. We have already spoken of the intense difference in force between the opinions of different persons, how one opinion is a real social power and the other a simple cypher. But this is far from being the measure of the complex phases of opinion. There are some kinds of strong wills, which tend to accumulate more or less passive wills round them, some which inspire a kindred will in others near them, and some which, though respected in the sphere of thought, tend to rouse up a weight of resistance when they pass into the sphere of action. These kinds of will differ in each community, and in each community they differ from day to day; and likewise the effects which they produce differ in each place and in each season. That which men do, will often differ widely from that which they say they wish done; and what they will suffer to be done, differs immensely from that which they would do themselves, and still more from what they say should be done. Bodies of men, large or small, from a nation to a railway board, will permit an energetic leader whom they trust to do things in their name, or to commit them to things, which the majority would themselves shrink from, and which even at the moment if a vote were taken they would probably reject. Yet even, whilst doing what they imperfectly understood or even disapproved, they would be conscious of full responsibility for the action, and would be acting entirely as free agents. And this ascendency of a leading character in a group large or small, either as powerful statesman, or as chairman of a committee, is

a perfectly legitimate ascendency, and is compatible with vigorous life in the body which submits to its force. The error of almost all theoretical plans for improving the Suffrage springs, it seems to me, from the assumption that the object is to get at the *independent* opinion of individual voters. Now I submit that only the minds of the logical temper, and those are far from the best political intelligence, have an *independent* opinion; and even if we could get this sort of opinion, we do not want it. It is a poor thing in itself, and could not be used in politics. In politics we want the *organic* opinion of masses: what they will ultimately and jointly approve, not what they originally and separately think. Where the judgment of those influenced is surrendered, or where opposition has no free play, there it is true, Opinion is suppressed and all the evils of forcible rule are imminent. And where this pressure of any ascendency is long continued, tyranny in some form is already established.

But in the healthy working of free institutions of whatever kind the influence of the leading character or group of leaders will never be more than temporarily in advance of the majority, and even then will always have their passive if not their active concurrence. This is the quality of Opinion, this capacity to grow and fashion itself with immense rapidity from within, changing the balance of parties, and transforming its whole aspect with strange elasticity, which is the key-note of Opinion in political aggregates, and which makes it so impossible to reflect it by any mechanical suffrage. This Opinion, which democratic theorists

desire to stereotype and reflect by periodical votes, is itself one of the most subtle and elastic of all vital forces. It takes new shapes and undergoes enormous organic development almost from hour to hour; and if it could ever be adequately presented in votes, the votes would need to be perpetually registered anew; for it has more moods than the Ocean, and it takes new aspects more quickly than the cloud like the man's hand on the horizon can gather into the thunder-storm.

Throughout these pages we have spoken of the *effective* or real majority in force, as distinct from the *numerical* majority in mere numbers. And the distinction seems one which is all-important in politics, though it is the tendency of votes to conceal it from us. The effective majority is that section of any community or social aggregate which, for the matter in hand, practically outweighs the remainder. This it may do by virtue of its preponderance in numbers or in influence, or in force of conviction, or in external resources, or in many other ways. What constitutes an effective majority will obviously differ in each community, and at each season. And it will also differ according to the question proposed, or the end in view. For some purposes, as for instance in matters of taxation, no party can long remain an effective majority if it be a numerical minority, but in many matters, even of national concern, the effective majority may consist of excessively few persons; as for instance in certain reforms in the law, administration, or the like; for this very small body may unite nearly all

those in the community who have any effective opinions on the subject at all, and they will outweigh, and justly outweigh, an enormous majority of those who have no opinion on the subject, and who can have none, as it is beyond their reach. Almost all great things are done in communities by minorities not by majorities. But then they must be effective majorities, that is, have the real preponderance of the social force with them, together with this other condition, that they can, at the moment, lead the numerical majority in passive adhesion, and before long can convert that passive adhesion into reasoned concurrence. The key-note of an effective majority is that it is always becoming a numerical majority; or at least is always drawing more closely with it the numerical majority. What it is that constitutes at any moment this effective majority, is one of the most subtle and incalculable of all social facts. It is one of those powers which are more or less invisible and imponderable to any but the born politician. It can be weighed accurately and continually by the kindred soul of a statesman—but by no mechanical expedient in the world.

Hence, when we set up such a machinery as a Parliament to be the paramount organ of Public Opinion, there is an ever present danger that our machinery will get out of order, whilst at the same time it diverts us from independent judgments. In the course of ages an institution like Parliament develops an artificial world for itself, *imperium in imperio*, a fashion, a morality, a constitution of its own, in which its original purpose is more or less forgotten. It becomes a law

unto itself, with a whole corpus of traditions, and a code of practice accumulating around it. In a society like ours, deeply imbued with aristocratic instincts, a Parliament insensibly learns to affect the tone of some High Council of Notables, a Junta of the rich and great, descending not seldom to the tone of a fashionable Club. This character it has retained after two great Reforms with undiminished energy; and strangely our democratic Reformers do not yet despair, but trust that annual elections, and manhood or womanhood Franchise, will purge the House of its exclusiveness, just as they once trusted to the Ballot. It seems far more likely that no conceivable changes in the mechanism of the Franchise can materially alter the *personnel* of the House, so long as English society is not in revolutionary fever. Whilst Parliament is a great, indeed is the only power in the State, to be of it or to control it, will be with us the highest social ambition; and whilst the great and the rich retain their effective ascendency with the English public, they will keep the control of the English Parliament, whatever it cost them in money, effort, or concession, and whatever be the checks by which the Radical Reformer may think to oust them from the polls. Thus the two Houses, until (it might be) displaced in a storm by some national convention, must ever remain more or less in an artificial world of their own, profoundly inspired with the aristocratic temper, and seeing things through a halo of wealth and rank. But in any case a Parliament which is a traditional estate, nay almost a nation in itself, can never see the movement of opinion

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but in a somewhat artificial light, nor will it represent opinion but by a somewhat unreal voice: for it is ever thinking more of its own consistency and dignity than of the changes in the world without it, and is ever looking more to the high class which it reflects than to the nation which it represents. This would be so, more or less, even were the suffrage an instrument less treacherous than it is, as a correct index of the will of a nation, and if political art could succeed in filling those walls at Westminster with simple mandatories of the phases of national thought in place of the leaders of English society and industry. The usurpation by Parliament of Executive Government has had in this way a destructive effect upon its representative character, for the qualities needed for Government, or which succeed in securing a place in Government, are not always those which serve best as the exponent of others' opinions. Hence, on the assumption that Parliament is best fitted to govern by its containing the men foremost in power and of the most commanding nature, it is thereby departing from its office as a mirror of the general wants and mouthpiece of the common thought; and the more completely it assumes to be a sovereign assembly, the less does it become a typical representation. So there grows up an opinion of Parliament in place of the opinion of the country; and statesmen imagine that they have understood the people, when they have listened to a few party speeches; and that they have satisfied the people, when they have secured a majority of the votes of members.

'Now what is needed is to place the Executive more apart from Parliament, and more directly face to face with the nation; that it may study public opinion at first hand, weigh it instinctively without the apparatus of an imposing machinery, and cease to place exclusive reliance on Parliament as the mouthpiece of the people. The day has passed when any great assembly is the only channel by which to bring to the ears of the State the local grievances or wants of the nation. In former days Knights of the Shire and members for the boroughs actually informed the central Government of states of feeling and conditions of things which they otherwise had no means of knowing. Now the wonderful facilities for conveying intelligence, the meetings, newspapers, commissions, deputations, petitions, and correspondence, which never cease, mirror the perpetual heaving of thought far better than any Parliament could do, and the greater part of this energy is directed to inform Parliament itself, and to induce it to listen to the remonstrances, it is supposed to be sent to express. Parliament has long ceased to be the moving instrument of progress or an initiating force of any kind. It assumes the attitude of a resisting force. That which the nation requires, has to be wrung out of it sometimes by protracted agitation, and sometimes by party expedient. And its most ordinary office is that of acting as a sort of shield or breakwater to Government by neutralising much of the pressure which would otherwise be directed upon Government; and by concealing from it currents of opinion, which Government would otherwise perceive.

I have not examined at length the various provisions which, in the system from which I am arguing, would be made for the development of Public Opinion, and I pass them over for the reason given above, that they imply a society different from ours. They imply an immense development in the intelligence and general influence of the entire working classes, and they involve the habit of constant public discussion, and the duty of all public men to give weight to the opinion so expressed. Under the most evil times of the despotism invented by the late French Empire, in spite of an army and an administration of the most oppressive kind, the workmen of Paris undoubtedly controlled the will of the Emperor, and even amidst the prison-like silence of his rule, forced their voice upon him to more purpose, than the voice of the English workman can often force itself upon the House which parades so loudly its privilege of popular representation. None of the arguments I have used as to the defects of democracy or the fallacies of the Suffrage, have at all shaken my conviction that in the free and continual expression of Opinion by the great labouring masses the true statesman is to find his ideas and inspirations, his real problems and his purest critics; not by servilely adopting their demands or crudely attempting their projects; but by ever watching them directly and with sympathetic insight, to learn what are the tasks most pressing for solution, how his plans work in effect, and where he has failed to relieve an evil.

This opinion is not properly reflected in the House of Commons; nor do I believe that any change could

ever cause it to be so. As an ultimate appeal or formal test of opinion, where two policies are openly contending in the nation, Parliament has its office as the best machinery for any mechanical measure of opinion and parties that we have in our hands, and in any case, as better than actual strife. But if Parliament remain as the natural sanction of Governments and the formal arbiter of policies, we must never forget the consequences, now that it is really the Executive council, of relying upon it as the exclusive medium of public opinion, or lose sight of the defects which are inevitable to its work as the organ of the general wants. Some defects of the kind are natural to any medium whereby the ideas of the public can find an expression. Even the Press, in its multiplicity and perfect freedom as we know it, is after all but a very imperfect instrument for estimating the true state of the public mind. Journalism like every other fixed institution has its own traditions, its own world, its standard of opinion, its prejudices, its limits, all the Idols of the Cave where it dwells and toils. Enormous indeed are the functions which are thrown upon it in the absence of great popular statesmen, of high public education, and the abdication of all Churches from the care of daily life; and it needs every assistance it can find in its high task, as the one organised spiritual power for counsel, progress, and justice. It can hardly be doubted that the enormous preponderance in the State, with which the House of Commons has gradually invested itself, has overshadowed journalism, and has converted it into something which is called a fourth Estate but is really

an appendage of the Commons. The connection of the two is so close, the interests and energies of the leading journals are so deeply identified with those of parliamentary parties, that freedom of criticism and independence of view cannot otherwise than suffer. We can all see, in States where the Executive is more or less distinct from a legislative chamber, and where a Parliament is not in paramount ascendency, how much more keenly a government will watch public opinion, and with what directness of force that opinion is expressed. Opinion in short is a power which must be seen in many aspects and through a multitude of channels, which no single institution can exclusively express, and which is best felt by the instincts of a competent statesman, when brought face to face with it directly, and responsible to it immediately.

CHAPTER XI.

ALL REAL GOVERNMENT IS PERSONAL.

We thus again come back to the truth, that government of every kind is really personal in its essence, however much it may be also popular in its spirit. There can indeed in the strict use of language be *no other government but personal government.* This perfectly elementary condition is not at all peculiar to government; it applies to every practical sphere of life, and in short to every act. Collective government by the entire nation, in its literal meaning, is not only not a good thing but it is an impossible thing. If a man's leg is to be amputated it must be done by a surgeon—skilful or unskilful it may be: but the operation cannot be performed by the whole College of Surgeons. Nay, if the College of Surgeons, with all its skill, merely stand by, and suggest plans and criticise the operator, the patient will probably die under the knife. Every joint work of human activity, be it only the mending of a road, must be directed in the doing by some one capable of converging that activity on an intelligible result. To assume that this activity will spontaneously converge by the force of collective wisdom is a phrase not an argument. In practical things we are perfectly ready to accept this fact, and

even in a gigantic Railway company, with the revenues and the administration of a small State, where all our habits of public life come into play, it never was proposed to carry on the undertaking by means of collective wisdom. Votes, except formal votes, are not often taken at all, even in the select meetings of the Board. The collective wisdom of the shareholders exhibits itself by suffering, or rather requiring, the Chairman to direct the policy, the Manager to organise the trains, and the drivers to work the engines on the rails; and if the members of the Company do occasionally intervene to put in a veto, they never propose to manage the Railway themselves. If a rebellious group of shareholders in a moment of indignation insist on pushing even their veto dangerously far, they are almost torn in pieces by the business instincts of the body of the proprietors. I wish to draw no forced analogies between the management of a Railway and the government of a State; but it seems certain that in our practical affairs of every kind we use language and forms which really correspond with facts, whilst in affairs of state or politics we use language and follow customs, which can only correspond with the facts, if these facts are at the mercy of imbecility and confusion. The attitude which we formally expect our statesmen to assume, and their own uniform tone, would imply that whatever be the subject, the true governing element is in the entire nation, or in selected constituencies, or in assemblies, boards, or committees, of some kind, never in persons; that it would be a kind of treason against the public that any man should

pretend to a governing position; and that of all political curses personal government is the one most to be abominated. In practice no doubt this peculiar attitude is put off; for political societies could not go on if it were not. But it cannot be doubted that the prevalence of this tone vitally affects the creative energy and leading power of our statesmen, and makes the public suspicious of the slightest indication of gifts, which are simply the test qualities of the real ruler. The historic accidents of our oft-converted constitution, pieced and adapted as it might be some feudal fortalice that had been transformed into a railway terminus, have all helped to engender the idea that personal government is national treason, until the man capable of it is regarded with the horror reserved in some ancient republics for the public enemy who was aiming at a 'tyranny.' Men who, as shareholders, expect the Directors to manage their affairs for them, as citizens, expect the government to be a mere reflector of current opinion. And it must be admitted that the most restless spirits and most arrogant of statesmen are in this country careful to assume no more. But there is no difference in kind between the management of great concerns and the government of a State. The direction of a cotton mill or a landed estate is a real assumption of government; calls out very much the same qualities in those who lead and those who follow; and can only be properly administered upon kindred methods. Struggling as we have done for centuries to enforce respect for the national consent, and to consecrate the element of public co-operation in govern-

ment, it may be that we have grown into the habit of regarding the co-operation as the government itself, and the consent as the initial power. Not merely is it our habit to treat the nation collectively, as governing itself; but in every public department and work we trust in meetings, chambers, commissions, boards, conferences: never in men. Our whole idea of public business culminates either in the assembly or in the committee; the large, public, oratorical, and combative, form of collective wisdom, or the smaller, secret, practical, and compromising form of collective wisdom. And then we often wonder why we find so few men of governing power. The answer would seem obvious that we do not give them the atmosphere in which to grow; nay rather that we create a public sentiment which makes them impossible. There is no magic which makes democracy dangerous in a mass, but salutary in a selected body or representative assembly. The democratic principle is the same whether it be applied to a Parliament, a committee, or a cabinet. Work which must be done by some qualified head will never be done at all, if we never dare trust anything but a Board or a Chamber. And whilst we will recognise the attributes of sovereignty only in these, it will not often befall us to breed them in men.

This jealousy of men, it must be said, centres round the theory and practice of parliamentary Sovereignty. It has grown up along with the development of the Houses, and its worst consequences are becoming apparent, now that the last touches have been given to the practical autocracy of the Commons. The Whig

theory which began in a nobler way, has ended in this as a public profession, with large understood reserves of personal exemption. The Tory theory has simply surrendered to the Whig, becoming in practice distinctly more democratic. The result is that from our public men comes loudest, this eager disclaimer of personal ascendency, this apotheosis of Ballots, Committees, and Boards. And it will be found that this constitutional horror of freely trusting a qualified man to do a definite work, is common only in the classes who are most addicted to the high electoral ritualism. It is rarely found to the same degree amongst the artisans and labouring classes. We find them usually displaying a very great readiness to accept personal leaders; and one of the charges the oftenest made against them is, that they are prone to act in masses at the bidding of a popular manager. What by a gallicism is sometimes called the democracy is usually very much less democratic in its method of action than the aristocracy or the plutocracy. If we take the present assembly of Versailles (January 1875) as the maximum standard of pure democracy (or, 'every man his own government'), then a vestry, or the Liberal Party, or a clerical synod will stand very high in the scale, whilst the Union of Amalgamated Engineers, or a great meeting of workmen will stand quite at the opposite end near zero. Whatever I said during the agitation for parliamentary suffrage was said in the faith which I still retain, that the admission of the political sections of the working class to a real share of power must be a measure that would strengthen, and not

weaken the ascendency of personal capacity, and that they would infuse a new spirit of concentration into a political system, enfeebled by perpetual dispersion of all authority. It was in that sense that I addressed to the London Trades Council and its friends the Lecture which may be read in these pages, and which they adopted in the spirit in which it was offered. It perhaps is the truth, that the actual reform effected was so manipulated for party purposes and so bereft of its natural complement, a real Redistribution of Seats, that instead of frankly admitting a new class to a share of power, it artfully enlisted new recruits into exactly the old ranks, and carefully subjected them to exactly the old discipline.

For the thousandth time men ask, how is your capable man to be secured? And again the only answer is, that he will be secured when the society is in a state, first, to produce a capable man, and secondly, to know his value and use him when he is produced. If there were any machinery by which capable men could be produced or even discovered, there would be very little need for what might be just as well turned out when wanted as a new steam-engine. It is just because there is no machinery possible wherewith to concoct capacity, that it is of such value beyond price. The very putting the question—by what formula are we to evolve our leader?—shows that the questioner is just in the frame of mind when moral forces are thought to be generated from mechanical contrivances.

The Good Time cometh not with observation; nor can we predict further, than that the Capable man will

appear when the society is ripe for his work. We have got so superstitious a reverence for ballot-boxes, representative assemblies, and party organisation, that we are struck dumb with astonishment when these sacred emblems of orthodox freedom fail to elaborate great men. We are getting now quite irritated, as we find, that not even repeated Reform Bills and reiterated measures to secure purity for the secret practice of the electoral rite, have yet succeeded in supplying the demand for men. Like the simple races who scourge their gods in a storm, we are falling upon the institutions, which, in spite of continual repairs, seem to rob us not only of the breed of leaders, but also of the faculty of being led. It is no doubt unjust to accuse the times of barrenness, or to disparage the powers of the men who stand before us. It is plain that as fine abilities are created in our day as in any other age; we have at least as much force of industry and activity; and we are not lacking in imagination, public spirit, and power of organisation. We may fairly assert that in faculties of exposition and general humanity of fibre our public men were not surpassed by their immediate ancestors, even if they were equalled. Cynical attacks on the statesmen of our age appear to me peculiarly unjust; and it is to be deplored that a great genius should have set the tone of disparaging our public servants. It is we, rather than they, who are wanting. We have amongst us now, as ever, mute inglorious Pitts, or Cromwells guiltless of their country's greatness. We may be confident that it is not men who fail us, but the situation favourable to bring out all their strength. If

we trust too much to institutions, and are for ever revising our machinery, we are closing the avenues through which the true statesmen appear.[1]

To the real King, at any rate, there never was any royal road. But the republican ruler whom we want is not by any means the divine and unique being, of whom sometimes we are told, that the Fates *Ostendent terris tantum*. Great as are the requirements of a competent statesman, and high as we rate his qualities, there can be no difficulty in our modern world in finding abundance of men qualified adequately for every public trust which is ordinarily needed. But Julius Cæsar himself could do nothing in a world where every other man felt it a privilege to wear a ballot-box on his shoulders. All that we can do to promote the advent of the man or men we need, is to raise and clear the tone of public life, to extend political education in its true sense, and to extirpate worn and enfeebling superstitions. We need not pull down, we need not even remodel, our institutions, if we only learn to shake ourselves free from the stiffening hold they have upon our minds. Our institutions will at once shape themselves to our

[1] I do most emphatically disclaim as my meaning any general depreciation of the services and capacities of the best of our public men. The system under which they work is, I think, enfeebling, and their position frequently a false one; but their efforts, merely within that sphere are often very eminently skilful as well as entirely patriotic. Some of our departments of State, where not under the spell of Parliament, such as our Judicial system, the Exchequer, the Post Office, the India Office, the Police, &c., &c., are, I believe, conspicuous examples of successful *administration*. When we pass quite out of English habits and routine, as in the government of India, the Abyssinian war, the Ashantee war (I speak now solely of skill), we see the British race able to put forth the highest qualities of command and of discipline.

new attitude—they are very elastic, and have shaped themselves often like a glove to the hand that wears it—so soon as a vigorous life from within inspires them with new political ideas. Public men, classes and orders of men alike, may all have to learn a new tone of public responsibility and political duty; but it may well be, that the best of the working classes will have to learn less than others. It results, then, that political education is the one thing needful. If public men come to bear themselves like men fitted to command, the public will come to second them as such men ought to be seconded. Yet it would seem as if at present both were alike agreed, that such a relation is neither endurable nor possible.

CHAPTER XII.

ALL FREE GOVERNMENT IS REPUBLICAN.

But this again is but half the truth, and perhaps the half with the smaller power of separate life. If we were to stop at the point of personal ascendency as the source of government, we shall place ourselves just back in the world, which it has cost the people for generations such sufferings and efforts to shake off. If there is nothing more to be done than to give our rulers free power and then to submit to their decrees, any of the despotisms of our day or our friend the Shah of Persia will serve for an excellent model. And there is nothing more to be said in the way of political teaching, than that it is much to be wished our despots should be wise and mild. It is not reassuring to find that the various schools or counsellors, who have undertaken to defend the principle of Authority, have had little enough to say which amounted to more than this. From the profound passion of De Maistre, to the mechanical formulæ of the Syllabus; from the majestic despair of Burke's last years, down to the artificial savagery of our historic Hero-worshippers; and so on down to the bitter-sweet which distils from the curled lip of modern Culture and Art, we have heard only of the blessings of Authority or of the judgments which await

all who hesitate to bow the knee. The bare principle of Authority alone is the old-world claim of Tyranny, which if anything is finally settled, is past and irrevocably judged. However much men come to think, and they are now thinking, that the dogmas of pure democracy, or the constitutional formulæ we inherit, are far from a satisfactory code of political wisdom, one must indeed be an idealist to dream that these dogmas are without an eternal foundation of truth. It may be that they contain in too absolute a way imperishable truth; whilst they only contain one side of it and deny the other. Wherever we turn in modern Europe, we see these doctrines of the nation disposing of its own destinies, often defeated and distorted it is true, but always in the long run winning fresh ground; whilst the moral causes in which they spring broaden daily with civilisation itself. Those agencies of general enlightenment, those habits of social co-operation, that development of labour, which everywhere in modern Europe gave birth to the claims of the people to power, are everywhere increasing and not diminishing, and day by day grow paramount. If there be one thing in which the rational mind can rest with entire confidence, it is that the future of government in Europe must be in spirit essentially popular. It must be so, because every element which we can trace in societies as co-operating to found the passion for popular government, is not only deepening but broadening by every step which our civilisation takes; nay, it has already reached a supremacy where it exists almost without rival.

We must go farther even than this. The future of

political society is not only necessarily popular, but it is profoundly republican. It is so simply because the future society is essentially an industrial society. Whatever may be doubtful in the course of human progress, it is certain that the development of industry, the organisation, the knowledge and the cultivation which industry requires, are the key-note of what at least the immediate future has in store. But the development of industry involves the advance of the republican principle, and the gradual dilapidation of all the feudal, warrior, caste, institutions, however adapted or transformed. *Industry is essentially republican*; for its life is the free co-operation of intelligent masses; nor is industry more visibly destined in every modern society to eliminate every remnant of slavery itself, than it is certainly destined to disintegrate every stone of the feudal fabric. Slavery dies out before the sight of free Industry; the military types of society, with Caste, Privilege, and Idleness, blazoned on their shields, may parley and treat with it long; but in the end Industry will slay them too. An industrial world is a republican world: and a republican world is one in which the State belongs to all, exists for all, and lives by the help of all. It undoes the rest to add—which is ruled by all.

The forms and degrees of this society are many; and we are to-day in one of the most complex of all its varieties. But it is in the genius of institutions to develop into their normal type. And the normal type of the republican world is unmistakable. It implies (and this, its minor condition is too often

thought to be the essential condition) the gradual disuse of the heraldic and pompous element in State function, as incompatible with the serious, intellectual, and popular spirit of republican magistracy. No chief of a great army in mid war ever cumbered himself with the trappings of Xerxes, Crassus, or Louis; and the real servant of the much-enduring masses should blush to be an actor in theatric ceremonials. But these are but small things after all. The essentials as we have said are these: first, that in the State life no man shall bear himself as master, that nothing of the public power shall belong to any class or family of right, that the common advantage of all be the sole object of public action, and personal fitness the sole title to public function; secondly, that all public resources, treasury, army, police, material, shall exist only by direct consent of the people, and shall be administered only by their active participation and continual co-operation. And if on all these latter things our practice carried out our professions, there would be little more to be said.

It being thus an indispensable condition that the spirit of our modern societies shall be more and more truly republican, the problem which the future has to solve is simply how to combine with this basis the responsible leadership of qualified men. The two elements of the case are: first, that the nation feel the necessity for accepting capable guidance as fully as it prizes the duty of asserting the force of opinion; secondly, that the leaders feel the necessity of public co-operation as deeply as they recognise their own duty of assuming a

free initiative. The alliance of the two principles is difficult, for it is the goal of social harmony, but it is not impossible; and it is often now for a time secured in practice. It is an alliance which can only be worked out in practice; it would be pedantry to propose any formulæ or instruments for securing it. They of all others would seem to be furthest from it who ask by what institutions and contrivances we can manufacture it. By none, but by sound education and a diffusion of true political axioms. We have to educate the public to accept republican statesmanship, instead of claiming democratic inefficiency; we have to educate statesmen to use power without ever degenerating into force. Public power is only the concentration of public opinion, but public power not inspired with a mind and will, consistent and sustained in itself, is little more than the power of a mob. It is not beyond the range of human sagacity to invest in men by consent immense collective power; whilst providing that it shall not have force to coerce the public consent. It is not beyond the range of human sagacity, to impel an intelligent and free people to a course of sustained activity, without ever presuming to do violence to their judgments or their wishes. When we are asked to formulate the process in acts of parliament or legal propositions, we must once more fall back on the illustration of the great trading company. Tell us by what legal propositions the direction of a vast Railway or Bank succeed in impressing their policy on the development of the business, without forcing the shareholders against

their opinion or consent, and we will then tell you by what formulæ something of the kind is done in States. The methods are not to be told in theory; though in practice the result is familiar enough. All we can say is, that in sound concerns with intelligent and business-like proprietors, and a superior Board of Management, the thing is done every day. And in a healthy State with wise statesmen something not wholly dissimilar has been done before, and may be done again. Though they be not so alike as to suggest any puerile comparison, there is enough in common between the State and the trading Company, to make many lessons of the lesser most useful for the larger association. There is no mystical consecration about the State to exempt it from the practical rules which apply to all other associations, where men combine for definite material objects. The State is no metaphysical or theological entity, but an industrial corporation for the improvement of our active life. Nor is there any reason why principles, which we hold essential to the success of all other corporations, should in politics be replaced by magnificent sophisms about self-government, personal equality, and the rights of free citizens. Free citizens have the same rights as free shareholders; the true question for both is the wisdom or folly of asserting particular rights in given ways. And that should not be held to be impossible for the State, which is matter of daily practice in other practical communities. The old maxim of constitutional hypocrisy was, that the Head of the State should reign but not govern: the new maxim of republican

reality may be, that the Head of the State should govern but not reign. Should not reign, either in the old sense of royalty, or in the military sense of imperial tyranny, hereditary or elective, nor even in the arbitrary sense of the Dictator, podestà, or Protector, who is forced into absolutism by civil or foreign war. He should govern in the spirit in which the great rulers of a free people have often directed their destinies, without suppressing their influence, or defying their will. History will show that this has been done, when the fit man appeared in the competent community. And political theory can do no more than assert that it is a natural and possible combination of things. To reconcile the indispensable leadership of capacity, with the indispensable co-operation of the public, Authority with Numbers, a powerful Executive with a free Republic, is the great work that awaits us. For my own part I think something will already be done to secure it, when it is acknowledged as a political axiom; when the public instinct has felt that these two imperishable principles can be reconciled, and must be combined.

PART II.

STUDIES OF POLITICAL CRISES.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

In the second part are collected some Essays which were published at intervals between the years 1867–1874, and which may be taken as the application to current politics of the principles treated in the former part of this volume. As I find no change of any moment in the principles contained in the first part as compared with those which were the basis of the following Essays, so I find nothing of any moment in the Essays which I have any occasion to withdraw. They were written, it will be seen, at times of very keen political excitement, of great expectations, and great discontent; such as in days of political lethargy it is almost difficult to recall. They must therefore be read as being, what, in fact, they were, addresses upon practical questions, then passionately debated, in a highly-wrought state of public opinion. If in form they share the prevailing warmth of discussion, I do not find that in substance they differ from any deliberate judgment I may have formed in the calmest of seasons at some distance of time. I prefer therefore to retain them, in the form in which they were written, as studies of current questions and crises, amending them only on sundry points of language, and omitting allusions of merely ephemeral kind. Some notes and explanations have been added; but in the text of the Essays, though much is omitted, nothing has been added; the alterations concern matters of form.

The first Essay appeared in March 1867, at the time when the Conservative party, having defeated the Reform project of Mr. Gladstone, was proceeding with an air of the most singular indecision to settle the question by means of

Resolution. It was the epoch when Mr. Disraeli was educating his party and its leaders, and probably was trying experiments to discover the minimum point which Reformers would accept, and the maximum point which the House would concede, with a kind of vague hope that chance, ingenuity, or time, might stretch these maximum or minimum points till they met. It was an epoch when perhaps almost everything depended on a few persons, of whom Mr. Disraeli and the late Lord Derby were the chief. No one expected, and certainly the essayist did not, that anything like a Reform Bill would at that time pass into an Act. The 'Cave,' with the secret or open approval of a great majority of the House had effectually supplanted the party (or, almost we should say, the knot of politicians) who honestly desired a serious Reform. Nor had the signs of popular agitation attained any serious dimensions. In a few months, whether by the genius of Mr. Disraeli as a tactician, or by the ugly look of popular discontent, or by one of those sudden panics which befall armies, parties, and classes, in fact the *maximum* concession and the *minimum* of demand were brought to meet, and an Act was passed. As will appear from the second Essay, this never seemed to the writer to be much more than an exceedingly clever *re-lining* of the existing system, with possibly ultimate consequences yet to be seen. It would have been strange if the Conservative party had deliberately put power into the hands of the masses. And certainly they did not do so.

The Parliament here described was, it will be remembered, the Parliament of the Palmerstonian epoch, the Parliament which had just intrigued away the Whig Reform; which, except on questions of finance, where Mr. Gladstone was supreme, had done almost nothing of lasting importance since the days of Peel; the Parliament, lastly, which year after year had discussed, evaded, or smothered almost every one of the leading changes which have been passed since the Reform Act of 1867.

ESSAY I.

PARLIAMENT BEFORE REFORM, 1867.

SECTION I.—*The House of Commons as it was.*

'The hypocrisy inherent in English Constitutionalism can never be effectually suppressed without the intervention of the people.'

AUGUSTE COMTE.

'TELL us,' says the 'Times,' echoing the new champion of our ancient institutions, 'tell us what the House of Commons has done that it ought not to have done, or left undone that it ought to have done.' No question, it must be allowed, can be more reasonable; and in the answer lies the whole key of the Reform problem. As yet no answer is forthcoming, or rather is not forthcoming in Parliament. Perhaps the grand vice of Parliament, in a word, is a splendid unconsciousness that it has any vices. It takes good care that it shall not be rudely reminded; for it is ill disparaging a great personage to his face, and easier for him to find flatterers than counsellors.

After all that has been said, it may be doubted if full justice has been done to the speeches of Mr. Lowe. In our memory it has not been known that the arguments of one independent speaker have accomplished

so much; checked the current of constitutional development, roused the upper classes to resistance, terrified the middle classes into hesitation, and stung the working classes into action. Ministries change and measures fail from very slight causes. The set of political ideas does not. Before Mr. Lowe spoke the aristocracy were secretly averse to change, the middle classes openly undecided, the people in excellent temper and in no haste. He spoke: and he gave to the first a cause to fight for; to the second, much food for doubt; to the last, the indignation which knit them into a power. There was some new thing which moved all three. It was this. Into very cultivated and not unthoughtful brains, long silently uneasy, there flashed a keen dislike of the social idea by which Reform was claimed, a vision of the possibility of extinguishing it as an idea. The opposition to Reform was wide and deep before; but it was inorganic. It had neither principle nor audacity. And suddenly there burst on it a rallying cry, in which it could hear both.

The speech was marvellous in its results rather than its quality. Great it was as an intellectual effort, but not quite unapproachable. In logic it has been matched by Mr. Mill; in wit by Mr. Bright; in intensity by Mr. Disraeli; whilst it had nothing of that sympathetic charm with which Mr. Gladstone sweeps his way into men's hearts. It was a powerful argument put with masterly skill, and not devoid of sincerity or courage. But its prodigious effects must have been due to something else. They were due to

a certain potent truth which underlay the whole; immortal though misused, trenchant though perverted; but which gained a startling and unmerited success by the rottenness of the theories to which it was opposed. Mr. Robert Lowe is not exactly Demosthenes; and if a speech of his has deeply modified political thought, it seems not unnatural to conclude that it did this by virtue of a solid political truth.

That truth is that the exercise of political power is a function, not a right; that the beginning and end of it is good government; that it cannot be an end in itself. This doctrine, stated with philosophic precision, urged with fearless logic, and illustrated with refined wit, came like a revelation upon the flabby minds of uneasy Conservatives. For years, we may almost say for centuries, English politicians had constantly assumed that a vote was a right, a very precious right, and that apart from any consequences which might arise therefrom; and Conservatives and Liberals were agreed to argue on thoroughly false issues. The hypocrisy inherent in our Parliamentary system is such that questions are rarely contested in that arena upon their genuine ends. The reasoning of the leading reformers was crippled by this radical sophism. The 'Christian' argument for the extension of the suffrage; the 'flesh and blood' argument; the 'fathers of families' argument; the 'tax-paying' argument; the 'gross income' argument; the 'industry' argument; the 'ancient lines of the constitution' argument; the arguments from the numbers, the wealth, the progress of the people; the famous argument about the 'burden of proof,'—all arguments,

in short, which make the suffrage a privilege apart from its practical results, are only forms of one and the same fallacy.

Mr. Lowe had an easy time of it whilst he tore to pieces this well-meaning clap-trap. As he showed triumphantly, all these arguments contained a double fallacy. They proved a great deal too much; and they proved something wholly beside the point. It was the old story of Ambiguity in the Premiss and *Ignoratio Elenchi*. On the one hand the whole male population—and for that matter, on scriptural warrant, the whole female population—are 'our own flesh and blood;' a very large number are parents; and a fair percentage are Christians; paupers, idiots, and felons augment the indirect taxes; and the veriest boor has often worked hard, and kept the Ten Commandments. So far as these arguments go, they are arguments, if for anything, for universal male and female suffrage, and very poor arguments for that.

In the second place they prove, if anything, that very desirable qualities exist in large portions of our countrymen, but not the qualities in point. The fact that numbers of unenfranchised people pay a large proportion of the taxation, possess and produce great collective wealth, and conduct themselves like worthy citizens, is a good reason for holding them as an important element of the State, for its providing for their well-being and their wants in every way; but it is no argument for their assuming the control of the State, unless some distinct advantage is proved to arise thereby. That the working classes do so much to

create the prosperity and wealth of England is a very poor argument by itself for a change, the result of which might be to enable them to ruin that prosperity and squander that wealth. It is the last thing which we need fear to follow from Reform. But the argument is mere straw without proof of their aptitude for government. That a ship's crew are sober and laborious is an excellent reason for raising their wages or increasing their grog. It would be a strange reason for putting them, or some of them, in command of the ship.

In fact, every claim to the suffrage as a right is only a poor echo of a very different thing. There is but one such claim that has any logic or consistency in it—the right to universal suffrage. The doctrine of Rousseau and the 'Rights of Man' is at least not self-contradictory. The doctrines of our constitutional reformers as to electoral rights are nothing but timorous and cloudy repetitions of this. As theories, they are open to every objection to which the full theory of rights is exposed. They blunt its force by their cowardly misgivings. They lack that noble faith in collective humanity which half redeems the generous sophism; whilst they but exhibit the mongrel origin of our constitutional ideas, for they are nothing but the glorious old error of the Revolution confused, enfeebled, and misconceived.

But though as a critic and in offensive war Mr. Lowe enjoyed an easy victory, it is not at all clear that he did not commit precisely the same fallacies

himself. Like an able dialectician, he kept the weak side of his own case in the background, and left it to the inferences of others. But none the less did he prove too much, and prove something wholly beside the point. He proved not only the proposed, but the existing, system of representative government to be irrational and rotten. He showed that to do something was open to risk; he did not prove that to do nothing was safe, or even possible. His warning voice came too late. If a moderate extension of the suffrage would ruin the constitution, the discovery should have been made before it had been six times attempted by ministries and once or twice by himself.

He established, at least to his own satisfaction and that of a House not insensible to adulation, that Parliament is already the perfection of human wisdom, and gives the people everything that is good for them. It may be so; but this is not exactly the basis on which Parliament is popularly supposed to exist. It is perhaps the first time in our history that the theory of a paternal oligarchy has been so nakedly stated; or that the House of Commons has stood forth in the new part of the Benevolent Autocrat. We have always gone on the idea that the function of that House was to represent truly the will of the people. There was an old notion that the people's money could not be taken without the people's leave. It is no answer to this old—it may be mistaken—doctrine to assure us that it is good for the people to have their money taken; and that it is wanted for purposes which wiser heads than theirs think right.

Then again, he showed how very great, and good, and wise the House now is, and how very mean, and vicious, and foolish the new class of voters would be; what awful things would happen if majorities returned a House of Commons; how the executive would be dislocated by a numerical representative system. Well—but the bulk of the present constituencies are exactly the narrowest, least public-spirited, and most corruptible class in the country. The small tavern-keeper and tenant-at-will has his virtues—chiefly economic and domestic; but you might ransack Europe for a class less fit to control a great nation's destiny. Now this sort of people at this moment forms three-fourths of the voting power; and for purposes of jobbery, bungling, bigotry, and obstruction generally, they are actually paramount. A Benevolent Oligarchy may be a noble thing; but not plus the most debased shape which popular representation can take. Men who are in earnest, and are quite alive to the sophisms of the pure democratic platform, are sick of a system which has become an Organised Dead-lock. The present system combines all the evils of a thorough class-rule with all those of a spurious representation.

It has been said that Mr. Lowe's speeches form an indictment against the English people. In fact, they form an indictment against the English constitution and parliamentary institutions. If the notion that the suffrage is a right of full citizenship, or that paying taxes is a reason for controlling expenditure, or that ministers should be responsible to the nation through its chosen organ, if these notions are so ruinous—and Mr. Lowe's

argument logically leads up to this—what in the name of logic is the meaning of constitution? what is the value of the parliamentary power of the purse? what sense is there in ministries depending on parliamentary majorities? It is impossible to have it both ways. Either the suffrage is wonderfully narrow, or else the functions of Parliament are curiously wide. The House of Commons cannot have as its chief glory that it represents the people; and as its chief excellence that it is not elected by them.

If, after all, the key of Reform be not the rights of the unenfranchised, but the efficiency of Parliament, it is a great gain to have the matter put upon this distinct issue. Let us heartily admit that the great, the sole ground for an extension of the franchise is this, that the existing House of Commons performs its task ill, that by the proposed change it will perform it better.

Now in the first place the House of Commons is not charged with sins of commission, but of omission. It is very easy to show triumphantly that it neither robs, oppresses, nor silences any English citizen. Those 658 well-bred gentlemen are no tyrants, and nobody is likely to say so. They happen, however, to have the absolute control over this nation, boundless opportunities, credit, and prestige, no difficulties, and no antagonists. They have inherited the most splendid political opportunity of modern times; the wealth, the confidence, the force of a free people, might be theirs without a rival. And their sin is to be wasting this precious birthright in doing nothing. Few governments have had such a field. Few have ever so well suc-

ceeded in duping their people, in degrading their political tone, in stifling public activity.

No difficulties, I have said; and by this is meant no difficulties other than those inherent in all modern statesmanship. They are not like the statesmen of France, of Germany, of Italy, of Spain—placed in the centre of revolutionary struggles, threatened with international perils, inheritors of despotic or decrepit predecessors. They have every chance, and no obstacle without. Grave and deep difficulties they have, such as beset every ruler of every European people. Great social wants, all within the due sphere of legislation, we have like our neighbours,—greater even than our neighbours. Our people are ignorant below the standard of any civilised race north of the Alps. Our pauperism is the most colossal and corroding. Our public administration and our legal machinery the most chaotic; our municipal and sanitary system the most cumbrous; the state of our great cities and our labourers' homes the most utterly heartrending; the state of Ireland the shame and despair of our policy. On every one of these subjects legislation can do something—can do much.[1] Over every one our legislation mumbles and fumbles in vain session after session. Verily, if vast opportunities for improvement be measured against urgent wants of improvement, all that it ought to do and might do, set beside the nothing that it does, the mighty task it claims to perform, weighed against the chaff of words with which it wearies

[1] It has been hard at work on all these subjects ever since 1868—let us trust with results.

expectation, this Parliamentary government must be set down as one of the worst that modern Europe has known.

It is a poor plea that they form an orderly assembly, that they are mostly gentlemen, kindly, and sensible. It would be strange if they were not. They are industrious, it is said. True; they talk for ten hours a night without a pause, and muddle over 500 bills which come to nothing. True, there is the private business, in which monopolies are scrambled for by schemers and money-lenders. True, there is no 'lobbying;' but there are committee-rooms where speculators traffic and wrangle over many a public right and private interest. It must be allowed that there is nothing too small for that House to consider; but, on the other hand, there is nothing small enough for it to accomplish. It is true that many flowers of rhetoric flourish in its soil, that it utters often very fine sentiments, and still retains much of its historic reputation. But historic reputations are not eternal. To possess vast power, to owe that power nominally to the people, is no merit when the power is wasted and popular origin is nothing but a mask. With the greatest of all tasks before it, and the grandest of opportunities, it gives us nothing but wearisome talk and profitless busying, deluding a great people to think that *that* is the type of government and freedom.

What is it that this great institution, charged with almost unlimited power, and absolutely without an opponent, has effected within a generation? The answer to this question is usually the eternal common-

place about the Repeal of the Corn Laws; an act, be it remembered, forced on the House of Commons at the price of revolution, by the statesman and the party whom it now reviles. The House of Lords once passed the Catholic Emancipation, and Charles I. put his name to the Petition of Right, but neither of them are thought to be very much distinguished by the deed. And who made these corn laws? They did not grow. They were simply imposed by the fathers of the very men who now boast of having repealed them. It is no such stupendous act of wisdom in men to have had wrung from them the redress of a flagrant instance of selfish misrule, for which their immediate predecessors are responsible. More than a generation ago they passed some acts of criminal law reform, by which our brutal code was brought up to the standard of other civilised nations. Many of the worst barbarisms in our legal and administrative system were redressed. But these are arguments for Reform, for they certainly would never have been achieved without the movement of 1832. However, since the splendid act of patriotism in repealing (under compulsion) the oppressive laws which their own fathers had made and fought for, what has the House of Commons done? A few petty legal changes, a few minor administrative changes, a useful financial reform, the legitimate consequence of Free Trade, one which has been more or less carried out equally by continental states, by imperial France, by bureaucratic Prussia, by struggling Italy; one which still leaves England the most unequally taxed of all European countries; the only state which has

no real land-tax, because the state in which landholders bear most paramount rule. Twenty precious years were passed without an obstacle:—no national education, no efficient poor-law, no reorganised army, no law reform, no contented Ireland; the ancient iniquity of game-laws unabated, the laws of landlord and tenant, of master and servant unredressed; men who care for public good wearied out, till no man is so desperate as to venture to force anything through this jungle of obstruction; practical improvements untouched from very despair of their ever becoming practicable;—twenty years of laborious indifference, and apathetic commotion, two thousand nights, twenty thousand hours of discourse, bills, resolutions, blue-books, and returns by square miles; and what is the result?—tons upon tons of spoiled paper, and the memory of some fluent talk? How far would England have been, other than it is, had 'the voice of a free people' returned to St. Stephen's 658 articulating machines?[1]

To most politicians of the older schools all this must sound wild and unmeaning accusation. Of course Reform is needless to any but a Reformer. To change the Parliamentary system on the ground of abstract right, for the sake of symmetry, or to stifle a claim, would indeed be a wanton disturbance. The sole justification of Reform is the accomplishment of definite changes.

[1] Immediately upon the Reform Acts coming into operation at the end of 1868, measures were passed on almost all these questions, which had simply been talked about for more than twenty years.'

Those to whom these changes are bad things must necessarily admire the system which postpones them. Of course, none can see the vices of Parliament but those who desire what it exists to stave off. To the rich man, especially to the rich landowner, the present social constitution of this island offers almost as much as modern civilisation can possibly give him. He is no tyrant and no enthusiast. He really has no wish to oppress his neighbour consciously; and does not dream of a golden era with a privileged class exempt from taxation. But modern society once granted, it is hard to say how he could make himself more thoroughly comfortable, if he were endowed with the power of creation. Of course, therefore, as he surveys the system—behold, it is very good in his eyes. He wants nothing, and to him the great merit of a government is that it does nothing. The science of government for him attains to absolute perfection when it leaves this stable equilibrium of his personal comfort quite undisturbed, whilst parading a resultless activity under the name of self-government, freedom, and progress. To such an one the grand glory of Parliament is that it does nothing—and does that nothing in a highly clubable, yet patriotic and constitutional manner.

Let us take each great duty of Government in turn. The national education of England is confessedly inferior to that of Germany, France, and America. The vices of our petty and incoherent method are allowed. The people craves a better system, no real obstacle opposes, nothing but inveterate prejudice. The English

traveller in America is humiliated when he sees what a kindred people, free from the curse of privileged classes and Churches, can do. It is admitted to be the first of all social wants. It is felt to stand at the root of all further progress. Yet for a generation Parliament has perorated and procrastinated. It might do so for another generation with as small result. Every hopeful movement is smothered or jostled aside. Each fresh scheme is met with the cant of self-government or a shriek of superstition. No grand national measure can so much as get a hearing. The best friends of the cause are driven to timid and paltry demands. The grand Obstructive paralyses all political energy. Patient of the bigotry of priests and sectaries, it is nothing to them that our people is a laggard in the first quality of modern civilisation—that they themselves are but an engine in the hands of obscurantism—in the name of Freedom and Religion. The gods of Epicurus lie beside their nectar, heedless of an ancient tale of wrong. It is possible to be at once omnipotent and lethargic.[1]

Pauperism.—One-tenth of our revenue, one-twentieth of the population, sunk in this abyss. The question is wider than one of administration. It concerns the pauper cancer in all its forms in city and hamlet, the desperate sloth, the abject abasement, the horrible misery, the hopeless future which weighs on artificer and labourer—that portent of modern life

[1] Inspired by the success of Mr. Disraeli in making Reform a Conservative instrument, Mr. Forster succeeded, in 1870, in passing an Education Act, which was in many ways a valuable gain, but which the old clerical obstacles to education soon saw to be capable of becoming an Ecclesiastical instrument.

over which economists despair and moralists sicken—that burden on this nation our legislators touch not with the tips of their fingers, content to wrangle over details of administration. And what a spectacle is that administration—with the abominations of the workhouse, the anarchy of rule, the selfishness and indolence of boards, the monstrous inequality of burden. All these things are known and admitted evils, yet Parliament in a generation has done nothing—nothing but moan and resolve. Here and there some petty abuse is removed, some detail of management improved. Nothing is done to meet the evil at its seat, nothing comprehensive, nothing bold. Every fresh minister comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. The meanest local gang or parish despot can defy a minister and intimidate a House of Commons. For the fellow-feeling of class interest makes the country landlord wondrous kind to the town guardian, and the House of Commons quails before a vestry as every class power will quail before unfaltering selfishness. It will talk and resolve and intend, whilst Pauperism and Bumbledom, the scandals of our age, mock at its half-hearted attempts, knowing well that no quarter in that limbo of abortions is better paved with good intentions.[1]

Take the case of Ireland. Politicians of all shades agree that it is the great problem of our imperial system. England and all Europe have just been startled by finding that we are still in the era of latent rebellion, that Irishmen still feel like an oppressed

[1] Since this date how much has been done by men of popular fibre and earnest determination who have honestly set themselves to the task!

race, not like fellow-citizens with us. The Established Church, the landlord system, the educational system in Ireland, remain still confessed and pressing questions, crying aloud for reform.[1] Yet generation after generation sees the English House of Commons tolerant of every abuse in them, heaping on them a few vain discussions, vigorous only in some critical work of repression. Year after year goes on: Ireland plots, murmurs, languishes; Europe accuses and sneers; English liberalism protests and invokes; but Parliament—the strongest political power in the world, by its history and titles the most bound to redress so great a scandal to modern civilisation as the state of that country, the victim for five centuries of English misrule—this noblest of human institutions has nothing to offer but acres of blue-books and libraries of Hansard. Of late it has dropped even this, and prefers to wait till the Irish race shall have worn itself out, and become quiet by the remorseless process of emigration and decay.

There is the Reform of the Law. For a generation the public, and even the profession, have been crying out for this work. The consolidation of our laws into an intelligible whole is the want of theorists and practitioners, of common sense and cultivated judgments. It is no impossibility, for most civilised people but ourselves have accomplished it. But no civilised people but we are governed by an absolute Ruler—a *Roi Fainéant*, whose great prerogatives usurp the whole

[1] Measures of 1869, 1870, 1873.

sphere of action, and whose invincible irresolution uses it only for inaction. For the twentieth time within a generation the Sisyphean labour is about to be renewed; again the spell-bound giant begins his futile toil.[1]

Nor is the re-organisation of the Military and Naval system less an admitted want. The scandalous waste of public money, of human life, of practical efficiency there, is the by-word of politics and the jest of Europe. Commission after commission discloses the corruption of the chief administrators, the abuses of the purchase system, the oppression of the privates, the inefficiency of their officers. Every year brings its crop of scandals and jobs. These are not the complaints of demagogues, but the notorious convictions of men and journals pledged to conservatism in everything else.[2]

Taxation is thought to be one grand glory of the House of Commons. No doubt the system which Mr. Cobden and his friends forced upon it and the conviction of the country, has been of very great service, and is thoroughly wise. But it must not be forgotten that it is a system which has made its way through the opinion of the Continent—one in which the government of the Emperor Napoleon has spontaneously accomplished more difficult tasks. But after all, after taking off taxes on corn and sugar, and from more than a thousand articles of commerce—a very desirable thing—the taxation of England still remains the

[1] Measures of 1873, 1874, 1875.

[2] Measure of 1873.

most inequitable extant. It would be difficult, perhaps, to find in Europe a country in which the land-tax was so thoroughly a mockery, or the tithe system so unreasonable. It amounts very nearly to a practical exemption from taxation on the part of the landholder. Until the land-tax produces at least five times its present amount it will not be a reality. At present, like most other things in our political system, it acts as a mask. It is a fashion to say that a land-tax would not be a tax on proprietors. Very well; let us see what they will say when it is tried.

On the conduct of the House in all matters of foreign policy, a man with pride in his country can hardly trust himself to speak. *Liberavi animam meam.*[1] For fifty years under its control our national credit has been sinking into a by-word. For fifty years it has clung to the Austrian alliance when that represented all that was rotten and baleful in Europe. It suffered Hungary to be crushed by Russia, against the protests of the nation, and then conducted the war with Russia which its folly had made necessary, in a mode which thwarted all the demands of the nation. It suffered our armies to waste; it rejected Poland; it half rejected Italy; it betrayed Denmark. It was no ministry that did these things—for ministers are but the secretaries of Parliament.[2] As each European question arose it resisted the will of the nation, and in

[1] In a book called *Questions for a Reformed Parliament.*

[2] The House of Commons rarely interferes in the details of foreign questions, and now hardly ever alludes to them. But the enormous pressure of its silent influence is felt by every foreign minister alike. Reform did certainly not mend matters here.

each case was wrong. In the greatest of modern civil wars, the American rebellion, it was perversely counter to the instinct of the people from the first to the last, and from first to last it was utterly and fatally wrong. It has thus reduced our foreign policy to total checkmate. The initiative of the people it refuses to follow. Its own tendencies and proclivities it is powerless to carry into act. It has brought our name into contempt, and the influence of England within half a century from its maximum to its zero. No English minister dare undertake anything; no foreign minister either fears or trusts his words. For his words are certain to be disowned by that power of public opinion which alone can give them effect. English diplomacy at last covering its discomfiture with such phrases as it can, has practically retired from Europe, content if it can wring from us a murmuring assent to its violent designs upon Eastern or half-civilised races, and win the sinister favour of mercantile cupidity.[1]

Such is this House. False to its origin and to its end, obstructive of progress, and indifferent to its office, not a real representation, but the mask only and symbol of it; not a House of Commons, but a House of Interests; not a national Parliament, but the Great Council in our Venetian Constitution.

[1] Compare the tale of the Black Sea Treaty with Abyssinian and Ashantee wars.

SECTION II.—*Popular Influence on Parliament.*

NOTHING is more true than that the faults of the existing House of Commons are in themselves no argument for the extension of the franchise. The sole justification for change is that the existing system is bad, and that the proposed change will make it better. Reformers, therefore, have proved nothing, until they have shown that their Bill will produce defined results. Even then the argument requires some proof that the result will not be attained at the price of corresponding evil. The onus of proof which reformers must undertake is very extended and complex, but it is not one from which they need shrink. It is of paramount need to the State that certain laws be passed. Those who now hold power will not pass them. They feel them to be contrary to every interest, prejudice, and instinct they possess. They will cabal, agitate, procrastinate, and fight to the death, rather than pass them. Those who have not power will pass these laws. They know them to be entirely for their interest; they have set their hearts on them; they are the natural guardians of the cause. They will work and move until these laws are passed. The obvious consequence is—let power be taken from those who have it, and given to those who have it not.

It being established that certain measures are indispensable, and that the existing class of rulers will not

pass them, it is not difficult to show that another class will do so when it has the power. The masses actively desire a really national education. It has been put in the front of a thousand meetings throughout the country. But even if they care very little, and know less, about the question, to give them power would be to establish national education. If they do not actively desire it, they have no antipathy to it. They have no sectarian, class, and party objects. They care nothing about the Established Church, and are entirely neutral in the great questions of parish priest and parish squire. They are as free from local, as they are from clique, prepossessions. If their point of view is not strictly statesmanlike, it is at least national.

They come to the question with open minds. Now there are a hundred men in England who are abundantly able to devise a satisfactory scheme of Education, and to force the nation to recognise its importance, if they only had a fair field and no ingrained prejudices to uproot. The mass of the people—and they alone—could give them such a hearing and the requisite support. They would find all the men, whom in other matters they trust, active in the same cause. They would judge of a proposed law for itself, and without originating good laws they would assent to them. Being without class prejudice, they would be open to conviction. Being numerous and strong, they would carry conviction into act. And the end would be obtained.[1]

[1] The Education movement was launched on this wave of popular desire, by the minister who most definitely represented the popular feeling. It was characteristically caught up and utilised by a sect.

Just so it would be with all the rest. No one but a fanatic imagines that the people have very distinct views as to the mode of reforming the law, or the army, or the pauper system, or have had revealed to them the true specific for the maladies of Ireland, or the key of the Eastern question.

But what of that? Did the ten-pounders of the Bill of '32 know all about Fines and Recoveries? Had they studied Smith and Malthus? Were their views very profound about Irish bishoprics and grants in aid? Yet the introduction of ten-pounders was the direct and immediate cause of a whole system of invaluable changes in the law. There are plenty of people in this country quite competent for these tasks if they only get the motive power behind them. Once find the national force to insist upon the end, and it will have abundant and capable instruments to effect it. These reforms, the consolidation of law, the revision of the pauper system, nay, the condition of Ireland itself, are not such mysterious problems as need an angel from heaven to solve them. Other nations have accomplished tasks as gigantic without a visible interposition of providence. The way is not inscrutable where there is the will. Now the people, and they alone, have that will; and wiser heads than theirs will find the way. To give a man a vote is not to make him a cabinet minister. It is to give him an influence over the spirit of legislation, not to require him to draw acts of Parliament. What is wanted in the mass who vote is the desire for the right result, freedom from selfish motive, and willingness to trust in wise guidance. The

difficulties of execution are for the trained few who govern. The immediate result of a real Reform Bill would be to bring into the house some ten or twenty genuine representatives of working men, and some fifty or hundred more who would enable Mr. Bright, Mr. Mill, and Mr. Gladstone to carry out some of the reforms with which they are identified. The difficulties do not at all transcend human capacities, if interest and passion be curbed. And interest and passion can be balanced, not by a class, but only by a people.

No worse nonsense is talked than what we are told as to the requisites for the elective franchise. To listen to some people it is almost as solemn a function as to be a trustee of the British Museum. No one, we are told, should possess it unless he has a fund of moral virtue and refined culture; one would think that this island could only produce here and there a sort of typical sanctified grand elector, painfully trained up on the works of Hallam and Adam Smith. What you want in a body of electors is a rough shrewd eye for men of character, honesty, and purpose. Very plain men know who wish them well; and the sort of thing which will bring them good. Electors have not got to govern the country. They have only to find a set of men who will see that the government is just and active. They are so ignorant, says one. More ignorant as electors than certain members are as legislators? So venal, cries some hireling lawyer. So drunken, say men whose grandfathers were habitually drunk, and made maudlin speeches to a drowsy Parlia-

ment. All things go best by comparison, and a body of men may be as good voters as their neighbours, without being the type of the Christian Hero.

Perhaps the very silliest cant of the day is the cant about culture.[1] Culture is a desirable quality in a critic of new books, and sits well on a professor of 'belles lettres;' but as applied to politics it means simply a turn for small fault-finding, love of selfish ease, and indecision in action. The man of culture is in politics one of the poorest mortals alive. For simple pedantry, and want of good sense, no man is his equal. Any quantity of ingenious arguments, based on wholly fictitious premises, he will give you. No assumption is too unreal, no end is too unpractical for him. But the active exercise of politics requires common sense, sympathy, trust, resolution, and enthusiasm, qualities which your man of culture has carefully rooted up, lest they damage the delicacy of his critical olfactories. Political helplessness is only found at complete zero amongst the class of men who pick out the 'blots' in the last Reform Bill. Perhaps they are the only class of responsible beings in the community who cannot with safety be entrusted with power.

So far from being the least fit for political influence of all classes in the community, the best part of the working class forms the most fit of all others. If any section of the people is to be the paramount arbiter in

[1] It seems necessary to say that these words were not directed against mental cultivation or literary grace, much less against a poet and writer whom to speak of these qualities is to name. My complaint was of a *political* faction, who brought to a great national struggle nothing but the bitterest reaction and trivial criticisms of the academic sort.

public affairs, the only section competent for this duty is the superior order of workmen. Governing is one thing; but electors of any class cannot, or ought not, to govern. Electing, or the giving an indirect approval of Government, is another thing, and demands wholly different qualities. These are moral, not intellectual; practical, not special gifts; gifts of a very plain and almost universal order. Such are—firstly, social sympathies and sense of justice; then openness and plainness of character; lastly, habits of action, and a practical knowledge of social misery. These are the qualities which fit men to be the arbiters, or ultimate source (though certainly not the instruments), of political power. These qualities the best working men possess in a far higher degree than any other portion of the community; indeed, they are almost the only part of the community which possesses them in any perceptible degree. In political fitness the unenfranchised are, as a body, immeasurably superior to the enfranchised. In all that makes a man worthy of the suffrage, an average city mechanic stands at one end of the scale, and the 'cultured' critic and the small shopkeeper at the other.

Besides, the working class is the only class which (to use a paradox) is not a class. It is the nation. They represent, so to speak, the body politic as a whole, of which the other classes only represent special organs. These organs, no doubt, have great and indispensable functions; but for most purposes of government the State consists of the vast labouring majority. Its welfare depends on what their lives are like; its

institutions, its agents, its servants, exist for them. They know, by hourly experience, they only know, what social sufferings exist. By suffering, their social sympathies are stimulated; by necessity, their practical instincts are developed. They are free from the restless egoism which is the curse of all who accumulate wealth; from the self-indulgent indecision which is the curse of those who live in idleness. Theirs are the brightest powers of sympathy, and the readiest powers of action. When the social system is wrong, it grinds them first; it grinds them hardest, and it forces itself home on them. For these reasons none are so fit to ratify and watch the action of the State, and this is the end of the Suffrage. All this is far from giving them any fitness for the direct exercise of power, unless in some temporary crisis. Evil is the day for the State when any class has unlimited power, or when the untrained mass usurp the direct functions of government. But for the controlling power of opinion—the corner-stone, that is to be, of all rational government—the working body is the fountain and the life. And the Suffrage is but a lame and primitive contrivance for giving to Opinion a measure and form.

If, therefore, by any political contrivance, you could give a permanent control over Public Opinion in the State to the working class, you would obtain an immense gain. The reason is twofold. In the first place, you would give an immediate legislative impulse to those who alone wish to carry those measures which are needed. In the next place, you would give it to those who, in the natural state of things, are best fitted

to possess it. But, unhappily, even if you wished, you cannot by any political contrivance, and certainly not by a Whig Reform Bill, or even a Radical Bill, effect this transfer of influence from one class to another. Universal Suffrage would go some steps in that direction—but only some steps.

The constitutional figments have given so curious a twist to men's minds, that we have a habit of supposing that political power can be weighed out at so much a pound. The future of England is supposed to hang upon the wording of a clause. A 7*l.* franchise, and the constitution lives; a 6*l.*, and all is lost. But Reformers have very little with which to taunt Conservatives in this. Tory, Whig, and Radicals combined to exaggerate the practical effect of any bill. To men who look on any Reform Bill, even the widest, as a very partial and very temporary expedient, this vehemence common to the three parties is simply incomprehensible. If this represents the average of political opinion in the educated classes, parliamentary and journalistic cant have certainly done their work.

In an old country, where an organised social *régime* exists in full vitality, as it emphatically does in England, the political form counts for very little, and the social system for very much. England is an aristocratic republic, simply because the richer classes have a disciplined social power, in spite of a monarchic constitution and a popular franchise. Aristocratic Republic it will and must remain, until the roots and fibres of that social fabric are dissolved. Wealth, habit, tradition, skill, every form and influence which governs

daily life gives to this real, but ill-defined class, a real but ill-defined supremacy. You cannot destroy all these by an Act of Parliament, a form of suffrage, or a ballot-box. The real power is infinitely subtle, pervading, and elastic. The political form is crude, limited, and rigid. In its influence upon a nation, the set social system will count as ten, whilst any political method will count as one. Arguments from America, Australia, the French Revolution, ancient Athens, and the Hyperboreans, are unworthy of a serious answer. If the social system is almost everything, and the political form almost nothing, to compare political forms and take no count of the corresponding social system, is utterly puerile. Arguments from the politics of Laputa, Brobdingnag, and Lilliput, would be more valuable. Americans differ from us because they have a totally different social *régime*, not because their constitution is different, for the second is a consequence of the first. The practical effect of universal suffrage is utterly different in Paris and in Melbourne, because the social conditions are utterly different. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* is a fallacy more venerable even than the British Constitution. Societies and their political expression rarely coincide, and the first are remotely influenced by the latter. A man's education undoubtedly influences his political bias. But you cannot give a man a good education simply by changing his political party. Nor could you alter a nation's character by a millennium of Franchises and an apotheosis of the Ballot-box.

Can men on either side of the House be serious

when they chant jeremiads or jubilees over the suggested change? Was it ever known in this world, or rather in this country, that legislative results even remotely corresponded to constitutional franchises? Constituencies exist on paper, and their numbers are set forth in the book of Dod. But in practice they melt like defeated armies in a campaign. At the present moment the small shopkeepers and the small farmers form three-fourths of the electors. On paper they utterly swamp all other classes put together. In actual fact, they are almost ciphers. If a popular franchise swamps property, intelligence, culture, and independence, they are fathoms deep already, for the destinies of our country are numerically in the hands of the dullest, rudest, most servile, and nearly the poorest class now. But we all know that the numerical power is only a form; that the real political power remains with the real social power. The Reform of '32 was (on paper) just as much a swamping measure as any other. It gave the poorest class of the electors an overwhelming majority. Conservatives shrieked out that the end of all things was at hand. Yet the moment they had recovered their senses, and the generous ardour of the Whigs had burnt out, this utterly democratic franchise (as indeed on paper it really was) was so manipulated as to return a Parliament of birth and wealth. The suffrage is, to political result, something like a lever inverted—every ton applied produces but a pound of effect.[1]

[1] As we saw in 1874, a large extension of the Suffrage, the Ballot, and new Bribery Laws returned a triumphant Conservative majority.

It is hence very difficult to devise any Constitutional Reform which could make any serious and direct effect. Certainly no mere extension of the suffrage could do so. It would be easy, provided it were done in a quiet way, to establish Manhood Suffrage itself, with an ornamental Womanhood Suffrage thrown in to boot, and a whole train of graceful Fancy Franchises in attendance, without materially affecting the nature of the House, certainly without doing more than lead to some useful administrative changes. There are perhaps now not fifty real constituencies in the kingdom. And in half of the remainder you might give the vote to every man, woman, and child without very seriously changing the character of the representatives they return. Five millions are rather more difficult to manage than one million; but the holders of the real power are a trifling minority in the latter case as well as in the former. So long as things run smooth, votes are ciphers. The solemn absurdity of supposing that votes are the arithmetical equivalent of men or minds strikes us at once when we scrutinise it abroad. Here (except when we are electioneering) this absurdity forms our political gospel.

A vote may be everything or nothing. Its value wholly depends on the state of the political atmosphere. Universal suffrage in an easy time would produce far less visible result than a narrow franchise in an excited time. It is the heaving of minds and the strain of purpose which produces the end, not the machinery of expression. The effort necessary to carry a legal change produces far more result than the change itself

The great and useful results which undoubtedly succeeded the Bill of '32, were effected by the movement which carried it, not by the Bill itself. We can see now what a poor affair it was in itself. A mere dummy Reform Bill, over which both sides grew hot, and which both believed to be decisive, would produce twice the result of a sweeping measure which passed unobserved or undisputed. Reactionists who awaken agitation by resistance are actually creating that convulsion of opinion which a reform would effectually stifle, and which in itself produces more practical results than any reform. Those who desire real deep and solid changes in the State have everything to fear from a plausible reform of the constitution. The great danger of true reformers is 'a settlement of the question.'[1]

No doubt, when opinion is thoroughly fired, and a social convulsion has set in, a wide suffrage may become a tremendous reality, and, for a moment, a very marvellous instrument in its hands. But what then? When the social convulsion exists it can and certainly will produce these results, with or without the legal machinery. A legal form corresponding to its needs may do much to defer and moderate that convulsion. Men who deny their fellow-citizens legalised power, for fear they may use it ill whenever they grow mad, will not find them more tractable when they do become mad, for having never known what legalised power is. Should the working classes ever really take it into their

[1] A lesson enforced on them in January 1874.

heads to divide the property of the rich amongst them, or commit the other horrible excesses which disturb the dreams of alarmists (who talk as West Indian planters do of a negro insurrection), they are not at all the more likely to do so, but rather the less likely, by becoming responsible citizens in the State. Should they ever be wound up to Confiscation, it will be of little consequence if they have votes or not.

The belief in the vote as a constant and measurable thing is the root-sophism of this reform debate. It reaches its limit in the child-like and beautiful form of faith, known as personal representation. No honest man can feel anything but respect for the really noble intellects and characters which have given this theory its power, with some of whom it rests on a profound—but as I hold, a ruinous political and social theory—the theory of individualism; but it is impossible here to omit it, or to speak of it with gravity. It is in the view here put forth, the pedant's paradise, the millennium of ideologues, the zero of politics, the *reductio ad absurdum* of representation. Of course it is the strict logical result of the theory of representation. But no one, till now, has been guileless enough to take that theory in earnest as a fact. To assume that each Member of Parliament expresses, or ever in this world can express, the dogmatic convictions of his particular constituency, is like the notion of an intelligent Mandarin. Political force in a free people is a power infinitely subtle, sympathetic, elastic, intangible, electric. It is like life or health in the body. Can you measure,

weigh, or bottle up vital force; or parcel it out at so much a pound for each organ? Representation is a rude mechanical contrivance for fixing the most magical of moral forces. You need at present this clumsy expedient, as you may need a crutch; though it is a test of civilisation to be independent of any mechanical crutch. But to sit down and invent solemn rules and a labyrinth of mathematical formulæ for the use of the crutch, when what you want is to learn to trust to your legs, is, in this writer's opinion, worthy only of some professor of Laputa. It is to teach our Bourgeois how to talk prose. The life and soul of representation in practice is the contact of man with man, the thrill of social vibration, the ascendency of visible character. Personal representation, where constituencies are formed of scattered units, is but the corpse of representation. It is to anatomise the parent in search of the progeny. It is the old method of harmonising opinions, by fitting every man with a new occiput, an infallible specific, said the Professor in the Flying Island, if the operation be performed with the requisite art. Were it established to-morrow with a wide franchise, its first result would be to let all the unions, friendly societies, and benefit clubs, burial clubs, 'bands of hope,' teetotallers, and volunteer regiments nominate members straight off. In a year or two a house would be returned chiefly by a gigantic political clearing-house, and the entire first return would consist of Mr. Beales, Mr. Spurgeon, Mr. Charles Dickens, Mr. Bright, Mr. George Potter, Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Martin Tupper,

Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Charles Kean, and Lord Ranelagh, each elected by fifty or a hundred constituencies.[1]

But enough of this and similar nostrums. It will be a sad end for the Constitution, which at least has a great historic past, that in its latter days it should be handed over to the experiments of every projector. Personal representation, plural representation, minority representation, female representation, intellectual representation, equilibrium of interests, and reflection of classes, Magna Charta improved by the Binomial Theorem, the infinitesimal calculus of human wills, government by compensating automaton machines, and every man his just rights according to the Rule of Three. Working-men, who know how social masses flash into action and reveal their Chief, hear what toys and tricks amuse the sole depositaries of political sagacity!

Endless are the webs that can be spun out of the representative ænigma, for the whole conception involves a fallacy at its root. It is useless to point out the 'blots' of this or that artful mechanism for securing perfect representation. The great blot consists in devising any mechanism for an insoluble problem. Each successive Reform Bill of the season is only another solution of the quadrature of the political circle. And if it is wasting time to discuss theories of Representation, it is worse to discuss the petty subtleties of this or that Bill. The Bill of last year would not have altered the balance of power by one per cent.

[1] I adhere to this; but how 'the bubble reputation' rises and falls!

The Bill of this year may alter it somewhat the wrong way, but cannot alter it the right way more than one hundredth per cent. What is wanted is, not to give men votes, but to give them power. The grand object of the 'constitutional' and 'culture' factions is to contrive a Bill which shall appear to create a great many new votes, but really create no new influence—an exceedingly easy thing to do, and one which they have at last certainly accomplished.[1] The only test of a good Reform Bill is this: what result would it have in a division on such critical questions as the transformation of the Irish Church, of Irish landlordism, of the game-laws, of long entails. No Reform Bill is a Reform Bill unless it would transfer one or two hundred votes from one side to the other in such test questions. To double or treble the existing constituencies, and then to redistribute in a popular spirit about a hundred seats, might do this. But even this would be effective only for a time.

[1] And worked it to perfection (1874).

ESSAY II.

PARLIAMENT AFTER REFORM.

[THE following Essay was published in April 1868, when the English Reform Act of 1867 had been passed, and at a time when the Conservative Government were preparing the Scotch, Irish, and supplementary measures. It was a season when the most extravagant expectations were uttered, by Liberals as well as Conservatives, as to the tremendous consequences of Mr. Disraeli's Act, when three eminent Conservatives had left the party in terror, and when the Cave factions were assuring the world that the end was at hand. Events have proved, I think, that the view submitted in these pages was the true one. I have found nothing to add, and nothing to alter. What I wrote (see Essay VI.) after the Conservative triumph of 1874 is almost identical with what I anticipated in 1868.]

SECTION I.—*Immediate Effects of the Reform of* 1867.

WHEN, after many strange turns of fortune, the Bourbons were borne back to power by the recoil of the revolutionary wave, the astute Talleyrand put into the mouth of his master the reassuring *mot*, invented by the ingenious Beugnot: 'Rien n'est changé. Il n'y a qu'un Français de plus.' So when the tumult of the Reform tempest was abating, one heard, as it were, our modern Talleyrand, with courtly yet superior

smiles, 'educating' his party to repeat, 'Rien n'est changé. Il n'y a qu'un *million* (*i.e.* electors, sovereign people, &c.,) de plus.'

There is food for sad mirth when we watch the discord of opinion which the new Reform has stirred amongst the wisest of our public guides. 'It is a flea-bite,' cried the jaunty Chancellor of the Exchequer, to whom 800,000,000*l.* sterling of debt or a few millions of electors have no longer any illusions. 'We have only made their existing majority a little bigger,' growled the heir-apparent of Conservatism, with his incorrigible good sense. 'Ah! Middle Class, Middle Class! so good, so great, so unselfish!' wailed out like Cassandra the great soul of Mr. Lowe; 'educate, educate this sovereign mob, and at least soften the ferocity of our new masters.' 'Traitor! God will yet save the Throne and the Altar!' muttered the *Quarterly* in its wrath, mingling prayers with curses. 'Niagara! Beales and ragamuffins! Pit of Tophet! and Chaos-come-again!' shrieked forth that old prophet—old prophet now grown unpleasingly shrill and, indeed, unpleasingly rude—not at all the 'politest of men.'[1] And even Culture, like the dying swan, hath sung a dirge, and, smoothing her ruffled plumes with conscious art, awaits the crack of Anarchy and Doom. 'See,'

[1] Few things in this controversy have been more foolish and unjust than the coarse abuse of a true-hearted and cultivated gentleman who sympathises with the people, one who has done more than any living man to keep popular excitement within constitutional and out of revolutionary lines. The people even in this country have never had a more honourable, a more gentle, and a more educated leader. He is as much above his assailants in knowledge and moderation as he is in chivalry of nature (1868).

wails that transcendent bird, 'this sad *canaille* wants to be up and doing. Adieu authority, philosophy, criticism, and art! Farewell the grand manner, the air of distinction—great Style is dead!'[1]

Which of all these is the truth? Is it nothing, or is it the Deluge? Is it a party manœuvre, or is it the grand climacteric of the British Constitution? This question it is now proposed to consider apart from the conventional dogmas of party. Let us rid our minds for a space of the cant of journalism and Parliament about representation and party, and ask ourselves quietly, What does it really mean? The wonderful contradictions between our public authorities as to the results of the Act are made still more wonderful by the fact that they are all contradicting themselves. It is Toryism which is so triumphant over a Radical change, and Liberalism which is dismayed at the fulfilment of its dearest hopes. The men who should be the first to suffer by the change are the least alarmed, and those who have got their desires are the most dissatisfied. The performers have all changed parts, so that we hardly recognise our oldest favourites. The position of the author of the Act, which has enabled him to 'ruin the country,' he originally obtained by the belief that he was the one man who could avert that ruin.

[1] Culture, the great critical, artistic, and literary movement of our age, somehow took fright at the Reform movement, and, why I never could understand, imagined that the enemies of the Constitution were aiming a blow at her. At any rate she threatened to take flight from this noisy world altogether. I trust, with the Constitutional Party safe in power, she will stay to delight us in poetry, religion, and taste. What she had to do with Reforms, or Reform with her, I never saw, and cannot yet see (1875).

Most persons think that the old prophet has been rather slow to recognise his ἄριστος, and has done a good deal in his time to bring him into contempt; and it is a quaint conceit of Culture to restore Authority by majestic patronage of the unenlightened 'Barbarian.' The noble savage has a chance yet, it appears.

Let us try calmly to consider the actual political situation. It will be quite unnecessary to enter into calculations as to the effect of the new Reform in towns or counties, the mysteries of personal rating, and the minority conundrum. The astute gentlemen, the parliamentary agents, who work the stage tricks and subscenic trap-doors of the British Constitution are the only people who know anything about it, and even they do not know much, because, after all, electors are not bricks and mortar, and it is more difficult to calculate householders than to calculate houses. It is quite certain that a very large addition has been made to the constituencies, all from the wages-receiving class, which, with those previously on the roll, will give that class a clear numerical majority; or if well-informed persons insist that the small householders will not obtain a place on the register, this is, after all, a question of time and a matter of detail. Whether the new Reform is to give us half a million or a million of new electors, whether it is to come into practical operation in '69 or in '79, is a question of minor importance. The important matter is that, in the political balance, the working classes are legally in possession of a great *numerical* preponderance.

The point to consider is, what does this imply?

Because nothing is so certain a test of ignorance as to confound in politics numerical with practical force. In problems of pure mechanics it is usual to eliminate the question of friction; in political and social problems it frequently counts for from 50 to 90 per cent. What must be allowed for friction in the working of the new electoral machine?

Let us take the various items of the problem in turn, duly setting down *pro* and *con.* There can be no doubt that working men are not likely to arrive instantaneously at the mysteries of the sixty-one clauses and seven schedules of the Act which the House of Commons found it so hard to follow, and crowds of potential electors will not come into the register at all. This, however, is a question of time and of party organisation alone. As soon as the working of the Act is properly understood, and when any adequate object is open as the prize of electioneering energy, the new engine will be exerted to its highest pressure. If the strength of the old ramparts lies only in the chance that the invaders may overlook the breach, the impregnability of the fortress can hardly be looked upon as permanent.

But the real question is, how will the new electors act when they get to the poll, for thither by a short course or a long course they will infallibly come at last? To suppose that the chosen representatives of the new constituencies will be the mechanical reflex of their individual minds would be gratuitous pedantry. It never has been so, and it never will be. Elections are decided, not by numbers, but by forces; they are

won like battles by strokes of fortune and energy, not like competitive examinations by the mere summation of marks. It would be more true to say that members are returned by spontaneous and variable groups or knots of men, over which the constituency, as a whole, has at most the right of veto. It is so wherever the opinion of a body of men takes shape, whether as the audience of a theatre, as the panel in a jury-box, or as guests at a dinner-table. We see one or two energetic natures or social superiorities modified by accident, misconception, or intrigue, determine the result. Men never meet together anywhere, Convocation always excepted, without deciding like an organic whole, and not like an aggregate of atoms. And perhaps no single member of the House of Commons, unless it be a member for an University, truly reflects the average mind of those who elect him. It would need a book to trace the modes in which these forces act. Now power, now prestige, discipline, enthusiasm, wealth, loyalty, luck, and stupidity from time to time enable a party to carry their man under favourable conditions. But of all these, except the last, the most constant influence after all is that form of power which is the necessary attribute of wealth when it has wide ramifications, and holds numbers of men in its grasp.

If these forces have always moved the decisions of masses of men, and if the most permanent of these forces be the power of wealth, what earthly cause will prevent their continuing to operate hereafter? The Reform Bill has abolished the famous compounder, but it has not abolished human nature. Wealth and its

public influence will always be felt in any society, and it is quite right that it should be so. How much more in a social system so complex and well knit as ours? Every one who has looked attentively into the prospects of at least the forthcoming elections sees how very strong wealth and rank are certain to prove. So long as it is at all fair sailing, the bulk of the men who sit in St. Stephen's will be the same hearty and sensible gentlemen who now give the tone to that distinguished Club. And so long as that is the case, the pit of Tophet and Chaos-come-again will be adjourned, at any rate, till this day six months.

Then there is what in the language of the day is called the *residuum*. No doubt at all exists but that a large number of the possible new electors are at present much below the intelligence of the average town workman, and may be moved by corruption, coercion, or ostentation. Perhaps for one election or so it will be found that the Bill has rather widened than diminished the area of bribery; and it is far from impossible that by their energy, lavish expenditure, and the personal popularity of many Tories of wealth or rank, a Conservative majority may be seated in '69. Watch the strength of the party even in the great northern towns, in Leeds, Liverpool, and Birmingham. Study the history of the last election at that model people's borough of Bradford. Reflect on that strange partisanship of visible power which the untaught poor so readily put on—half schoolboy, half-menial, as when a crowd on a racecourse cheers the colours of a popular nobleman.

So far *pro* the theory that things are not much changed by the Bill. There is, however, something to be said *per contra*. The great fact of the new franchise is this,—one which has been too persistently ignored. The class admitted essentially differ in kind from the old. The old constituencies stopping short below the small shopkeepers, just took in the classes who form a recognised part of the social body from the capitalist point of view. They all had, and they were there by virtue of having, at least some small amount of realised wealth. They all employed some others. They all belonged to the officer class of the social army, even though the bulk were only sergeants or corporals. They all had a native veneration for property, and all the notions, superstitious or rational, which our social history has accumulated round that idea. You could not point the moral of a duke's deer-forest without making the cheesemonger wince.

All this is changed now in the constituencies. There is now not only a large number, but a great majority of the electors who have no property at all. Many of them have not half-a-crown on a Saturday morning. They are simply full privates in the rank and file, and not even corporals. They employ no one, but are all employed by others. They never have been admitted as full members of the responsible part of society. The theory has been, that the State took care of them; not that they took care of the State. They would talk over the duke's deer-forest upon general principles, as they might discuss Divine Right

or the feudal system, without any sense of profanity or indecorum in handling such a delicate topic. It is a wild calumny in those who pretend that the working classes are hostile to the institution of property, or will destroy it the moment they obtain the power. They have a deep and healthy respect for it in itself—indeed, a truer and nobler sense of its functions than any other class, for they recognise its duties. But the gross superstition in which its worship is surrounded here they do not share, that superstition which Mr. Mill so justly finds to be barely intelligible. They venerate property; but they venerate still more social well-being, of which it is the creature and the instrument. They have never been reared in that fierce, jealous, absorbing, and blind devotion to property, in all its accidents and phases, as a holy and ineffable mystery, such as we find it in those who have breathed from childhood the aristocratic or commercial atmosphere of this island. They have not been nursed from their cradles in the ever-present sense of its beneficent mercies. To acquire the true British dogged instinct of property you must be, as it were, 'to the manner born.'

As it is with property, so is it with the other grand pillars of our social system. The working classes have a real regard for our Queen; but, as an institution, the monarchy is to them a fact, not a dispensation. They are not disaffected towards the Constitution, but they have no vital and saving faith in it, and they never will have. They accept the *status quo*, and that is the end of it. The Church and the rest follow in the same

manner. The beautiful mechanism of our glorious Constitution; the subtler mysteries of our administrative and parliamentary organism; the wheels within wheels of self-government, which our cheesemonger feels down to the sacred independence of his own weights and measures; the grand ideal of the parish; the knotted torso of our colossal law; and all that which culminates in the jury-box of our Saxon ancestors,—these are venerable things which the workman half-admires and half-wonders at, like the objects of antiquity in the British Museum, understanding here and there. They are things which he has never been called upon practically to work, and of which he has never in person realised the blessings. Thus he has none of our cheesemonger's abiding sense of personal interest in the 'system.' He accepts the system, but he is not of it. The 'system,' if you come to argue it, is with him an open question.

Now the want of a very definite enthusiasm for the British constitution would not be of any singular importance if the moral and intellectual tone of the new electors were at all the same as of the old. But they are utterly unlike. There is no greater break in our class hierarchy than that between the lowest of the propertied classes and the highest of the non-propertied classes. In all that makes political force, in breadth of view, in power of combination, in social spirit, and in loyalty to their leaders, the latter are superior. It is just this difference in moral qualities between the two which men persist in forgetting. The trader, whatever his rank in his own class, by the

conditions of his life is absorbed in petty economic details, is harassed by the anxieties of traffic, trained to ceaseless competition; jealous, cautious, self-contained, and intensely and narrowly practical. These are just the qualities which make the fortune, but unmake the politician. What helpless puppets in Parliament are those keen men of business, whose wary genius has amassed fortunes! What a spectacle of mean stupidity is the typical cheesemonger crowing on his own vestry! The workman, whatever his rank in his own order, makes a type just the reverse—imprudent, generous, social, and imaginative. The only occupation for his brain is the study of public questions; his only strength is in combination; his ignorance of all the instincts and habits of business makes him prone to visions, Utopias, doctrines; whilst his moral nature having no true opening except in domestic and social feeling, his whole strength is given to unreflective and unsystematised ideas. Half the bitterness with which the battle of Unionism rages between the employing and employed classes is due to the fact that the workman cannot conceive men seriously choosing to live under the system of competition, and the capitalist cannot conceive men honestly preferring the rule of combination. Both systems and both these characters have their great merits, and both are indispensable to the welfare of society. But political vigour belongs to the social, more than to the individual type.

The workmen of course have their special failings, looseness of thought, credulity, ignorance, and a *naïf* readiness to settle things offhand which makes thought-

ful men shudder. These would make them very bad administrators or senators, no doubt. But they are not exactly political weaknesses. On the contrary, they just lead them to that temper of enthusiasm, energy, and faith in themselves which make a set of men formidable. The result is that they are fired by ideas to a degree that no other class in the community are; and then they act with a decision which is startling to men accustomed to the intricacies of business. In place of that stony impenetrability to mere doctrines which marks the whole business class, the workmen have an overabundant proneness to them. It is the fashion to talk of the English impatience of mere ideas, and this phrase is just an instance of this stony impenetrability itself. It is the mark of the governing classes and the commercial classes proper, and of them alone. The great English brains, the poets, the thinkers, and the moralists are pre-eminently gifted with ideas, and the bulk of the English people have at least their fair share. The typical wooden 'practical' man represents only about a tenth of our people,—just the classes which have been saturated with Constitutionalism and Protestantism. The brains and the hands are perfectly free both from cause and effect. When the practical Englishman stumbles against what he concludes is an idea, he at once cries out that it is a French importation, just as some persons denounce *morcellement* if any one speaks of the land. The capacity for political ideas is not French, it is only democratic. We call it French because the democracy in France is more in the ascendant than here. But it

belongs to the democracy of Europe, and to the English as much as to any.

The English democracy, in fact, are acutely susceptible of ideas—indeed, are the only large class in England who are—and capable of heartily combining to carry those ideas into practical result. But it is not merely a capacity for ideas: it is a capacity for generous sentiments which marks their aim. The ideas which dominate them are ideas of social good, of a higher order of life, of mutual help, not always very wise, but usually vigorous. Along with this is a spontaneous turn for combination, organisation, and adhesion to leaders,—a quality eminently un-English, if nothing is English but what is middle class—but eminently English, if it is possible to be at once English and republican. In spite of all the merriment which it may occasion to some sprightly persons, I deliberately repeat that the upper orders of the workmen possess higher and stronger social capabilities than any other class. This is not identical with political wisdom, but it is identical with political force. The point is really a matter on which mere literary criticism can give us nothing but *bons mots*. Those only who have known in personal friendship the better as well as the average men of this order can fairly estimate their value. The conditions of public agitation in England are unusually dangerous to the prominent agitators of all classes, and the working class, like the rest, would suffer unjustly, if judged by all those who profess to speak in their name. It is usual, moreover, to forget how completely the artificial training of the educated public imposes a

conventional restraint of manner on all that they do, and that uneducated workmen are wholly unskilled in the art of casting a plausible veil over their weaknesses. The jealousies, the vanity, the intrigues to which statesmen give high constitutional names, are seen in the people in their crude and naked deformity. Nothing but long habit and study can enable us truly to estimate a class which society regards in effect as something like another nation or race. And opinions not based on such knowledge may be excellent epigrams, but they are not evidence.

It is this proneness to general ideas, this instinct of falling into discipline, and active sympathy with leaders, which marks off the workman so distinctly from the shopkeeper. They differ more completely than men in the same nation living side by side often do. Consider the intense enthusiasm which men like Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Mill awaken in the mind of the working class. It may give them some day a force before which the vestries will wither up like tow. The writer was the other day exploring a coal mine, and chancing to ask some grimy bare colliers, hewing away in the dim air, in what part of the workings we were, they told him with some pride that they called it the 'Mill End,' after the member for Westminster. A trifle this, but a matter for thought, that those rough hewers, groping all their night of days in those choking cells of coal could be thinking of the author of a 'System of Logic' and of the pamphlet on the Condition of Ireland. Perhaps it is right to add, that the colliers were *not* drinking champagne.

Again, the argument respecting the *residuum* must not be pushed too far. No doubt the lower strata of the new constituencies, chiefly in the small boroughs, have very dubious political virtues, and may for one or two elections prove very tractable indeed. But what a fool's paradise to trust in as a permanence! As the small constituencies are disfranchised, and the growth of education advances, and the power of the working class becomes consolidated, it is inevitable that workmen of all classes will more or less amalgamate. In ordinary times there would be much to keep them distinct. Great is beer, especially seductive whilst men are tolerably comfortable and have bread to eat with the beer. But let us see a great national panic or passion; wait till some fixed idea seizes on the popular mind like a religion, and where will the power of beer be then?

The desperate attempt of the opponents of Unionism to stir up the lower strata of workmen against the higher has proved a complete failure. It is very well for the governing classes to rely on the residuum now, but what will it be when the people are violently aroused—the time when you really want your residuum? King Bomba relied on his residuum—the lazzaroni of Naples; and they did him good service before the earth began to rock beneath him. But on which side were the lazzaroni when Garibaldi came?

This being true of the new electors, the old ways of managing constituencies must be somewhat revised. All the old influences of self-interest, habit, prestige, great as they will be, will not carry the weight they

have hitherto done. The governing classes will have to learn a new style of governing. In stepping from the wages-giving to the wages-receiving class, they have passed into a new moral and social atmosphere. The old principles of human nature and our social order will be the same, but the system will be essentially modified, and subject to very new and remarkable impulses.

In fact, the change which has been made is one which, from its nature, cannot be immediately tested. It is not that a great revolution has been effected, but that great possibilities of revolution have. Until the fountains of the great deep are opened, all will remain very much as before. Power and wealth will control elections; the rich governing class will furnish nineteen-twentieths of the members. The corrupt boroughs, the bribery system, the nominee system, the jobbing system will perish hard and slowly. Rank will exert its time-honoured spell, petty interests will divide constituencies as of old, and Beer will be king time and again. The Millennium that the Radical hails, the Chaos that the Tory dreads, are alike the creation of delusion or of panic. The whole thing is in embryo as yet. The workmen are capable of great transforming ideas, it is true; but the ideas are not forthcoming—they have yet to be framed, or at least to be promulgated. They have a great sense of adhesion to their chiefs; but great revolutionary chiefs are in their cradles, or at school. The workmen have a native instinct for vigorous action. But the social force of

Conservatism is at present quite paramount.[1] Hence, with ideas still incoherent and unset, without immediate leaders of any genius, and a dense phalanx of material opposition before them, the new electors are certainly not likely to sweep the board; and to all appearance we may say that nothing is changed, but that there are a million of new electors, more or less—nothing, that is to say, on the surface.

Has nothing, then, been done? and have the rhetoric and the vigils of so many sessions been in vain? Yes! an immense work has been done. By transposing the legal balance of power from the wages-paying to the wages-earning class, a great *moral* change has been effected. The new power will slowly consolidate and feel its strength, and will be long in doing so. But in the meantime the barriers and outworks which fenced about the arcana of State are gone. The veil of the temple (reared by the Whigs in '88) has been rent asunder, and priests, acolytes, and worshippers are mingled together in a mass. The elaborate system of checks and counter-checks by which the great and good men who have governed us for two centuries kept public opinion at bay is all gone, at any rate in strictness of law. Formerly, what a jungle of public meetings, of deputations, of parliamentary resolutions, of press eloquence, of battling in committees, and lobbying of members did it need to pass a single acknowledged reform into law! Now, as by law is ordained, the people have only really to wish a thing done, and to

[1] As was overwhelmingly proved, six years after this was written, in February 1874.

mean to have it done, and it will be done. They are not likely to attempt it, but the process is infinitely simplified if they did.[1] The old British Constitution, as invented by the saviours of society at that great and glorious era, resembled nothing in the world so much as the famous automaton chessman. In that ingenious toy the amazed spectator was shown a multitude of wheels, cranks, and pulleys; saw the clockwork elaborately wound up, and heard it move with a strange and rumbling sound. The pieces, we know, were all the time really worked by a concealed player behind, who viewed the board through the sleeve of the figure, behind which sleeve he no doubt occasionally laughed at his dupes. Mr. Disraeli now, who loves a surprise, has simply opened the doors, discarded the clockwork, and shown us the man. The wheels and the pulleys are not needed now; we shall hear no more that strange and rumbling sound; we see our man, and we sit down to play a simple game of chess—king, bishop, knight, and pawn—and no legerdemain for the future.

To sum up then the various features of this great change, we may say that they are indirect, not direct; future, not immediate; latent, not on the surface. In a word, it is a *moral* change; a new power, a new tone, new possibilities exist. The old class of men, or men very like them, for the present will continue to sit in the House, but under very different conditions, and with an altered sense of responsibility.

[1] I must admit that there are no signs of this as yet (1875).

When the legal supremacy in the State is vested in an order of men in whom, at least, is latent motive power so vast—men craving for something to be done, capable of blazing up some day if they find nothing done—perhaps something will be done. The victorious soldiers of Cæsar are no longer on the Rhine or the Rhone, separated by half a continent from a majestic senate at home. They have not burst in upon the State, but they stand beside the Rubicon, whilst our conscript fathers anxiously deliberate in the Capitol. O, conscript fathers, be wise in time, for there is little to keep them from crossing that historic stream!

SECTION II.—*Possible Effects of Reform.*

HAVING thus tried to weigh the force of the new element which has been brought in, let us turn to the condition of the old elements which remain. For it will be of small consequence that the invading force is strong, if the defending retains undiminished strength. But does it? It is impossible to get over the impression that the Great Surrender of last year has in it the character of panic. Explain it as men will, there was about it the air of irresolution, of distrust, and disorganisation which mark a retreat. Now in a retreat it is the first league backwards which is decisive, and is never taken till all *morale* is gone. The trumpets of the besiegers gave no sound so overwhelming—indeed, many thought it somewhat discordant and thin—and lo! the walls of Jericho fell, to the astonishment equally of those within and those without. A party which thus 'turns its back upon itself' with no adequate motive, and with every appearance of not intending to do so, has given fatal symptoms of deep-seated weakness within.

It is a very striking, and from any point of view a very ominous fact, how feeble the various forms of authority are growing in this country. Ministers, Governments, Parliaments, parties, all yield to a mere push, squeeze with a slight pressure, collapse mys-

teriously without warning. A ministry now dare hardly bring in a bill to touch a corporation. If the corporation struggles, a cabinet trembles down to its subordinates, and yields, procrastinates, or compromises. Governments are plainly unable to keep a mob in check, and are afraid to try unless they have twenty thousand shopkeepers as special constables to back them. The whole House of Commons dares not face a committee of indignant pork-butchers. A cabinet minister has a poor chance with a vestryman. And a gas company can flout King, Lords, and Commons. The very principle of Authority for good ends as well as bad has been put to scorn by the weakness of men in authority. They do not believe in themselves, and they do not believe in each other.

Now the serious side of the loss of *prestige* to authority is that in this country it is practically denuded of real power. The Emperor of Russia might very safely inaugurate universal suffrage; and the Emperor of the French can hold his own in spite of it. The master of eighty legions has always his material strength to fall back on, if he gets the worst of an election or a debate. A centralised bureaucratic system gives a great resisting force to the hand that commands the Executive. Our Executive has nothing to fall back upon. There are practically no reserves. The few bayonets and sabres here and there are perfectly powerless before the masses, if the people really took it into their heads to move; beside which it is an instrument that they dare not in practice rely on. A few redcoats may be called on to suppress a vulgar riot;

but the first blood of the people shed by troops in a really popular cause would, as we all know, make the Briton boil in a very ugly manner. There are only the police, hardly a match for the 'roughs,' as we know to our cost. The Government would be mad which seriously attempted to face an angry people on the strength of seven thousand police staves. It was very easy to abuse an unlucky set of ministers about Hyde Park. But what were they to do? To have used the army would have been the end of the British constitution. There were seven thousand policemen, but what are they among so many?[1] The Executive in this country has absolutely nothing to fall back upon but the special constable, the moral support of the cheesemonger and the pork-butcher. Real and powerful so long as the pork-butcher is in good humour. But wait till the windows of the pork-shop are being smashed, and all about a quarrel to keep you in office, and you will see the ungrateful pork-butcher turn and rend you like one of his own herd.

Executive system (if system it can be called) is in this country so utterly disjointed and weak that its material forces in resistance are almost nothing. Property has, no doubt, an enormous social and moral *vis inertiæ*. But Government, as such, has singularly small material forces. Our greatest soldier in this age saw it perfectly, and so did Lord Derby last year.[2]

[1] The Force has been happily increased, and in spite of evident corruption in its legal relations, is no doubt better organised. But one can hardly think it yet at all adequate for the tremendous duties it might have to perform. Soldiers are for political reasons useless in England.

[2] There can be little doubt now that the famous Hyde Park riot was

The fact is that our political organism of the constitutional type was based on a totally different theory from that of force at all. The governing classes never pretended to rely on force. They trusted to maintain their supremacy by their social power, and their skill in working the machine. Local self-government, representation of the people, civil liberty, was all the cry, until at last the tone of English public life became saturated with ideas of rule by consent, and not by force. Very excellent theories of a certain kind—but you must abide by them, and never dream of force, for you have cut yourself off from the right to appeal to it. The least suggestion of force puts the governing classes in an outrageously false position, and arrays against them all the noble sentiments of liberty on which they based their own title to rule. Club blusterers jeering at trades' unionists in Pall Mall may talk about grapeshot and dragoons, but men with heads on their shoulders know that an appeal to force would be

an unpremeditated chance medley, arising out of an idle crowd eager for a frolic. I now know positively that the League never anticipated any violence, and Mr. Beales did not hear of any violence having occurred till late at night. After the riot very dangerous elements really appeared. There was the complete preparation for a grand street fight. I know of men of good position who travelled up to London from the North to fight, and that clerks in business houses had their rifles beside their desks. But all this was *after* the suppression of the riot, and simply its consequence. The rails were shaken down by an idle crowd, with no political purpose or instigation, as a mere piece of street mischief. Afterwards *political* forces of a fighting kind came on to the scene, or rather behind the scenes. The Reform Act was partly the result. It is difficult to see what else the Government of Lord Derby could have done, the mistake having been made originally of closing Hyde Park, without adequate force. Whatever the critics may say, was it worth risking blood and fire in London for the sake of a petty change in the electoral system?

the end of English society; and what is even more to the purpose, that there is no force to appeal to. Hence it comes that so many proud fortresses of Conservatism have been surrendered at discretion by commanders who felt with a pang that their magazines were absolutely empty. During the American war the Northern armies were long kept at bay by some tremendous earthworks bristling with cannon. One night the trenches were silently evacuated, and the terrible pieces were found to be painted wood. So for years the governing classes had kept Democracy at bay behind some imposing ramparts. But one day the Reform League discovered that they were mounted with canvas and logs.

So that however feeble the forces of progress may be, they can hardly be feebler than those of Conservatism. But this feebleness in material strength is nothing to the feebleness of motive principles and ideas. In the days of Burke or Pitt, nay, of Castlereagh and Canning, there was a potent and deep enthusiasm for the system as a whole, and a real faith of its resting on truth and reason. Who has any enthusiasm for the system now? A few clever men find their account in defending it with purely professional zeal. But as a rule the men of brain are heartily weary and ashamed of it. In fact, the intellectual class is cordially disaffected. They despise the whole apparatus, they dislike it intensely, and they resent its thrall. The constitutional, Protestant, mercantile imposture they can in their hearts endure no more. The religion of Parliament, Bible, and Free Trade has degenerated

into a self-seeking cant. They feel in how many things this system falls short of much that is seen in every continental system, how much more it falls short of any decent ideal. It is this stony impenetrability to ideas, of which the British middle class have made a sort of gospel, and in which the aristocratic class (who ought to know better) please to encourage them, that so revolts a man of any cultivation and a grain of imagination. Where is such an one to be found, not absolutely absorbed in politics or business, who is not visibly mocking at the whole apparatus in his heart? A lively writer of this class has opportunely transplanted the German name of Philistine. This happily describes that insurrection of the brain against the official and mercantile thrall which has driven those who believe in the force of ideas into closer sympathy with the people.

If there be anything in this, it is clear that the rule of this country will have shortly to be carried on under very altered conditions. There is nothing to drive any one into a paroxysm of alarm. It would be most unreasonable to accuse the present or any other writer who tries to examine the facts as they are, of incendiary designs. We do not create this state of things; we only point to its consequences. This is obviously not the language of demagoguism, but of criticism. The fact remains. The Government of this country has hereafter to be carried on under new conditions.

Now let us cast our eyes back for a few generations over the history of our actual parliamentary Government. In form and in name, since the 'great and

glorious' era, the elected representatives of the nation have ruled this country. But no man in his senses really believes that a motley crowd of 658 (or whatever else be now the magical number) have really *governed* anything. The grand commercial and colonial development of the last century, the Indian empire, the tremendous duel with the French Revolution, the great Liberal policy which culminated in free trade, were not carried out by an executive mob. Practically the governing class, a true aristocracy, possessed the entire control over Parliament and the executive machine. Like every other aristocracy with any life in it, they followed the great houses, and the great houses put forward and supported capable administrators. The Government accordingly was really and essentially an aristocracy; not in itself the highest type of government, as this was far from being the purest type of an aristocracy, but still a form of government quite capable of ruling a great country's destinies with some initiative and some vigour: and if with no great foresight, at least without collapse.

But of late the popular element admitted to Parliament by the Reform of 1832 has been steadily growing in extent, until their effective hold over Parliament and the Executive has almost slipped from the governing class. England is now hardly an aristocracy except socially, and for purposes of resistance. Politically, the governing class hold office, but they do not rule. What they did to the monarchy has been done to them. They reign, but do not govern. They can prevent anything being done, but they cannot do any-

thing. Their power of initiation is reduced to a minimum; their power of compulsion to zero. It has gone so far that they forswear as an odious imputation the suggestion of ever dreaming to initiate anything or compel any body, and real government implies initiative as well as compulsion. Hence a House of Commons and a Government which talk, and cozen, and procrastinate, and compromise, and smother everything in turn. In fact, under the constitutional *régime*, government was only possible because the practice did not correspond with the theory; and now they have changed it so that the practice must ultimately correspond with the theory.

Unluckily, however, this silent crumbling of the governmental edifice (forsooth as raised by the great and good men of '88) occurs just at the very epoch when a vigorous working machine is particularly needed. Direct parliamentary government is a potent institution in its own sphere. There are many things which it can effect in a very spirited way. The removal of ancient feudal abuses, the redress of sanguinary or effete laws, the abolition of monopolies, the *destructive* and equalising process of government, it can very properly undertake. The great and legitimate triumphs of parliamentary government have been all of this class. The conduct of commercial wars, imperial aggrandisement, the reform of our murderous code, the greater equalisation of taxation, the abolition of slavery, of intolerance, and of protection, are all works of this negative kind.

The tasks set to this age are very different. We

have now to face the *constructive* problems of government, the remedial process of rule—problems of curious difficulty, impossible to anything but concentration and genius. Now these are just the questions for which direct parliamentary action is extraordinarily unfit. Our social and industrial system, under the expansion which followed the removal of its fetters, has thrown out new and appalling forms of misery, strife, and anarchy. There grows, festers, and reproduces itself that dismal pauper population, filling half counties, quarters of cities, a huge tumour in the body politic, which it eats up with its parasitical swarm. There is the housing of our crowded poor, forced by the palaces of wealth into closer and more poisonous quarters. How long is society to continue inactive in the presence of a disease so odious and so dangerous? The great sanitary question at which we have as yet but timidly nibbled, the whole question of preventing epidemics and providing the first necessaries of health, grows ever more pressing and more difficult. Then there is the vexed question of the land. It is no use disputing it, the people have made up their minds that the soil of this country shall no longer be held on its present irresponsible tenure. Certain it is that the agricultural labourer is in a condition in which he ought not to be, and in which he will not long consent to remain. The reorganisation of our national education, both primary, secondary, and superior, requires skill and care of the highest kind. The reconstruction of the whole legal system is a task at once gigantic and indispensable. Lastly, the state of Ireland is one not for trumpery

revision of details, but for great and creative statesmanship.[1]

These are the problems which await this age. No one but a few zealots with a theory, no politician worthy of the name, seriously believes they are questions which are wholly beyond the sphere of government. It is certain that they are questions which Government cannot long neglect. For as civilisation gives us the increased knowledge and sense of duty by which great problems may be solved, it deepens and extends the violence of the disorders with which we have to deal. But these are problems of the highest order, requiring profound sagacity to eliminate their causes, patience to distinguish complicated symptoms, concentration to grasp the depth and reach of the problem, an instinct for adaptation to special conditions, a freedom from interruption to carry out a system of action, power to apply the remedies with force, and a recognised mastery of the situation.

Such being the conditions of the task, could human ingenuity devise a machine for solving it more impracticable than the current type of parliamentary administration? Let us clearly make it understood that there is no question here suggested as to the constitutional supremacy of the House of Commons. That, as a practical matter, is an admitted basis. The question is whether real government of this order can be looked for unless by a great modification in the

[1] It is a little curious that the various subjects of this paragraph all form topics mentioned in the Queen's Speech as part of the Conservative Programme for 1875. So little is the real difference between Liberal and Conservative administrations.

course of parliamentary procedure. The system of *debating* (originally one would presume a mere aid to legislation) has grown out into a principal object, a great end in itself, with a special set of rules and notions which have no connection whatever with efficient law-making. Men are made ministers, under-ministers, and secretaries, judges, ambassadors, governors, consuls, anything in the world, by more or less readiness in putting together a few adroit sentences, or in just hitting the conventional temper of a crowd of men possessed with a sort of jealous common sense, and very moderate statesman-like capacity. The thing is too ancient a by-word to be dwelt on here. All that is now suggested is the doubt if the system has not been abused almost till it bursts. Can any qualities of mind or character be less like those which are needed to carry through the most arduous of political tasks? The pettiest detail of local administration may, at any moment, form the basis of an eloquent debate, and a corrupt beadle or a naughty midshipman may be the hero of a grand party field-day. Peddling little bills, just timidly designed by a practised draftsman to worm themselves in between the crannies of interests and prejudices, are solemnly brought in and fought over, and sometimes do come out as laws all mangled and distorted at the end. But what makes them one thing more than another, what effect they may have in practice, depends almost exclusively on the accident of party fight, or the adroitness with which the wires have been pulled by those interested, or the 'business' power—*i.e.* the manœuvring skill—of the member who

chances to promote it. The probabilities of a measure becoming law are very like those of a horse winning a race, and are decided usually by analogous arts of the jockey.

The leading backers, who are usually called ministers, have to spend their time, not in studying the matters they have to administer, but in meeting incessant onslaughts of factious invective. No one of them dreams of proposing what he thinks the best for the case in the abstract, but tasks his ingenuity in finding what will collect together the strongest body of partisans. The atmosphere of the legislature is precisely that of a club when feuds in it run extravagantly high, and members spend their lives in canvassing to blackball sets, or to turn out the committee. The usual occupation of a ministry during the session is simply that of such a committee moving heaven and earth for re-election. The committee, of course, are not so imprudent as to introduce changes, or seriously consult the good of the club. They dare hardly discharge a drunken waiter or change a newspaper in the reading-room, lest it make another malcontent. To carry through the House even a simple and useful measure, and even for a popular minister, is a feat which tasks enormous powers, both physical and mental, utterly disproportioned to the result achieved, and almost no part of which is expended in the labour of devising the measure itself. The passage of a gas bill consumes about as much outlay of brain as might suffice to govern the Indian empire for six months. To carry an act is like submitting to the punishment

of running the gauntlet in a Russian regiment. It will need a tough constitution if one is to reach the end alive after every man along the line has delivered his blow. Our great caricaturist gave us last year a picture of our first living conjuror in this line performing his wonderful 'egg-dance;' and we saw him deftly planting his agile toes, ever grazing and yet not cracking the scattered eggs upon the stage. That was a picture—a true picture—of what is now called a consummate statesman carrying a great constitutional change. Statesmanship is now dancing between eggs; and they win who crack the fewest.

It is plain that when such are the conditions to which legislation must conform, very few really statesmanlike minds will stoop to such a game, very few characters can retain their vitality, and no grand results can by possibility issue. The whole atmosphere, spirit, and end of the system are artificial and alien to legislation. It is merely the mockery or parade of legislation, and not legislation itself. It is as vain and degenerate a form of the art of statesmanship as ever tournaments were of the art of war. The pride with which it is now celebrated and pursued by the men of the tongue and of the pen will sound some day as childish as the later chronicles of the tiltyard sound to us. To mature a comprehensive and radical reorganisation of any of the great problems of State would be simply a matter for speculative interest; in the House it would be lost in the bottomless depths of parliamentary talk. To look for a sustained and expanding system of policy would be futile; for policies mean the

watching the tempers of ever-shifting parties. To dream of a great ruler arising in that atmosphere would be indeed a dream; for rulers are so now only by flattering the caprices of an assembly. Unity, perseverance, energy, responsibility, are all impossible where all is rivalry, change, obstructiveness, rhetoric, and subserviency.

It is the fashion now to accuse the people of all the 'vices of democracy.' In Parliament, however, is the true democracy; there are its worst vices. Democracy does not consist in poverty, nor even in numbers. The vices of democracy may exist without the excess of ignorance, or the excess of passion. A democracy exists when an inorganic crowd seeks to grasp sovereign power; when each man in it holds himself as wise a ruler as his fellow; when offices are won by flattering their prejudices and ignorances; when mere gifts of tongue and powers for intrigue can sway such a body to the right or to the left; when what they determine one hour they undo the next; when government is a scramble, open to every glib talker; when mastery, and unity, and continuity of action are hopeless from the jealous and vain-glorious agitation of units. These are the true evils of democracy, which may exist quite truly without fustian coats or platform speeches; and they exist, more truly than in any assembly of the populace, in the assembly of the British House of Commons.

SECTION III.—*A Powerful Executive.*

LET men of all parties ask themselves if they honestly believe that efficient government can much longer be carried on upon terms like these. Those who have long felt it, as most Conservatives and as many Liberals have (views which have been admirably summed up by Mr. Lowe), fell into the natural mistake of supposing that the admission of the people to power would only add to the confusion. If I thought so, I should be, for one, the most resolute of Conservatives. But it is a mere misconception of the character of the people. The admission of the people will infallibly strengthen, and not weaken the executive efficiency of Government and Parliament. Paradox apart, the spirit of the working class is essentially, in the true sense of the word, less democratic than that of the capitalist class. They have less of the instinctive thirst for each man having his own way, which is the true sign of democratic ideas. They are accustomed to act in masses, and to act with concentration. They trust their leaders often blindly and obstinately, and thrust their whole collective power into their hands. They systematically delegate all business details to those whom they trust, and confine themselves habitually to the decision of principles. They are jealous of opposition when they

have made up their minds, and warmly impatient of private obstructiveness. Look at them in the action of their Unions: whether we like it or not, we must admit that they have struck out a way of combining vigorous co-operation with practical efficiency, great delegated power to the minister with real responsibility to the society. Without saying that this is always the truest political virtue, it is force, and it is not democracy. It is republicanism; whilst beside it, the aristocracy and commercial class have become so demoralised by constitutional pedantry and rhetorical ambition that Parliament has grown as unstable a power as the democratic Diet of the old Polish nobility.

The introduction of this republican element—for such it really is—will enable Parliament, if it chooses, to modify its system, and will modify it in its own way if it does not choose. It is for the sensible men of all parties to see that the time has come to reform procedure within St. Stephen's; and it rests with them to use the new electoral power for that end. If not, it will inevitably at last use them. From whence the leaders come in this movement is of no special moment. This is no party question, and Tories as well as Whigs may seize the occasion. If the historic aristocracy of England yet has vitality in it, it will adapt itself to the position, and again prove the right to that rule of which it now bears little but the ancestral dignities. 'If the English patricians,' wrote Comte, 'can effect the requisite recasting of their system, they may yet escape passing under the yoke of the workmen.' It is far from improbable that one of the governing houses

might yet produce a man with the nerve and capacity to become a powerful and popular statesman. It would smooth many difficulties and accord best with our traditions if it were so. But in default of this, should the governing classes throw up no competent chief, in course of time the people will discover one for themselves. To this it must ultimately come. For all the conditions of the situation, and every instinct of their lives, point to a rally round a capable Head. Slowly or swiftly, smoothly or roughly, we are tending towards a State with powerful chiefs, disciplined supporters, and real legislation.

Unscrupulous criticism, after its kind, may affect to see in this argument a plea for revolutionary violence or democratic imperialism. Those who choose to see in an opponent's language anything they please, are not to be denied that gratification by elaborate disclaimers. But a word to those who are willing to admit that a political writer may mean what he says. The whole change which has been described might be brought about without affecting the legal supremacy of Parliament, and without any constitutional enactment. It is a matter of practice, not of law, and can be properly accomplished only by the assent and efforts of Parliament itself. Any one who carefully examines at the close of the year the ponderous mass of the legislation of the session will at once perceive that nineteen-twentieths of its bulk consist in purely administrative enactments, such as properly belong to a responsible executive :—'An Act for amending the law with respect to the Accounts of the Receiver for the Metro-

politan Police District, and for other Purposes relating to the Metropolitan Police.' Conceive our 658 foremost men dividing and haranguing about that! 'An Act to allow warehoused British Spirits to be bottled for home Consumption.' An Act to 'Amend the Act to regulate the Keeping of Dogs.' 'An Act to regulate the Court and Office of the Lyon King-of-arms.' O conscript fathers! with what sauce shall this imperial turbot be served up?

It is no answer to tell us that under our great and glorious system of liberty it is the proud boast of a Briton to carry self-government down to the cut of a constable's coat-collar, and that, until the Constitution is altered, even these details require the seal of Parliament. But, in truth, the part of the Legislature in these matters is far more than formal; these and a hundred such measures during a session are actually debated and overhauled, go into committee, and go out, and pass through the whole apparatus of revision which an Act to amend the Constitution would receive. Amendments are proposed, faction fights are taken, and every device of obstruction is employed. Nay, the very bills are drawn with a view mainly to their passing this ordeal, and are first mutilated and diluted with a view to pass, and then are mutilated and diluted a second time in the act of passing. Few people with a grain of practical instinct would deny that administrative legislation of this kind would be effected in a manner far more satisfactory by a thoroughly competent minister under full responsibility to Parliament as to the results of his ministry. How can purely executive

details be successfully worked out by a crowd of men, four-fifths of whom know nothing of public business, and each of whom is subject to incessant personal solicitation and pressure?

The evil would be endurable if it simply affected the details of trivial measures—Acts about dogs and Lyon Kings-of-arms. But the same evil extends from the trivial measures to the great. Measures which, in principle, can be carried and are carried ten times over in the House, in application are as regularly defeated by the enormous leverage which the forms of procedure put into the hands of obstruction. The abolition of Church rates and of Tests is annually determined by great majorities of the House, and as often rejected by dexterous manœuvring of parties and forms. A mere resolution for the disendowment of the Irish Church, apart from questions of cabinet and party, could be carried by a powerful majority. But Parliament, if left to itself, will be twenty years before it can accomplish this obvious and popular reform.[1] Where the number of the legislators is great, the legislation must necessarily be petty.

Again, even this process of legislative trivialities only employs a fifth part of the actual labour of Parliament. Four-fifths of it are occupied by incessant struggles between rival parties, and real or fictitious attacks on a minister. Whether these succeed or not, they produce such an incessant wear and tear, and such

[1] It was seen in 1869, how by the impetus of a Reformed Parliament, and the unrivalled mastery of detail possessed by Mr. Gladstone, a rather timid measure was carried.

an excessive timidity on the part of the minister, that he is practically unfit for serious legislation or real administration. The puerile arrangement of offices, by which it is understood that each of the stereotyped parties are to take their turns in frequent succession, and each of the prominent performers in debate are to have their innings in due course, excludes any notion of government itself. During the last century Governments have been changed every three years, and sometimes every three months. And this at a time when patient and long-continued attention and labour are essential for the statesman in any high sense. The restless democracies of Athens or Florence never devised a more wretched scheme for making office a prize for the holder, and not a function for the public; and the class which passes its life in this ignoble game can thank God that they are not such as place-hunting democrats, or even as those Americans!

Every one of these evils could be remedied by a change in the temper of the House of Commons, without any dictatorship, or even constitutional change. Meddling in executive details, party fights over clauses, and constant succession of ministries, are not inseparable properties even of parliamentary government. They are only its diseases and excrescences. The House of Commons was once free from them, when it won its supremacy in the State, and it might free itself from them again. All that would be necessary would be that Parliament and public opinion should succeed in establishing in all administrative details absolute ministerial freedom with stringent responsibility in the

minister; for the machinery of legislation, an intelligent decision upon principle, with a delegation of practical application to the highest competent authority; lastly, for the permanence of ministries, to accept the possibility of continuing an able minister so long as his strength and efficiency continued.

Some such modification of the parliamentary system is not alien to the history—even to the recent history—of our House of Commons. During the long ministry of Pitt, and to some extent during that of Peel, the Government of the country, and its practical legislation were virtually the work of a statesman, and not of a clerk; a statesman responsible to Parliament, but not hampered by it, and really accountable to the nation. The governments of Lincoln and of Cavour, in other countries, have shown us how possible it is to place in the hands of a great and popular administrator vast executive power, whilst making him in practice the instrument of a legislative assembly, and intensely in sympathy with public opinion.[1] Nor can any reason be produced why the people should not force Parliament in the same way to recognise the ascendency of a

[1] I should now in some aspects add, the Government of Bismarck. I abhor very much in the ends he sets to his action, and in the spirit in which he performs it; but in many respects he realises the type of great governing power informing public opinion. The opinion, however, of Prussia has three cardinal defects, arising, first, from a gigantic military system, secondly, from an over-grown bureaucracy, and lastly, from the educational centralisation in the absolute control of the Government. Prussia is accordingly now the country where free opinion is most rigidly suppressed, or most systematically corrupted. Were free opinion developed in the nation, in a measure at all proportioned to the development of its Government efficiency, Prussia would present, I think, a high political type. As it is, it does so, I believe, only on special occasions.

capable ruler, to give him its hearty co-operation and support, and, without surrendering an instant its right to displace him upon manifest failure, or its own absolute control over the national purse, to watch, advise, stimulate, and support him, without harassing him with ignorant interference.

Visionary as such a proposal may appear to those to whom 'Parliamentarism,' has become a second nature, they ought at least to remember that 'Parliamentarism,' as known to us now, is a special product of this age and country, and is absolutely unknown and has never yet had life in any civilised society or in any other era than this. It is a purely artificial system, under which no sort of men ever yet have lived. The great body of the new electors have absolutely no taste for it, and no understanding for it. It cannot be understood in idea except by a special education in itself. It would be a profound evil if the recent reform has but brought another class under the influence of this unnatural system. Such a fear, let us trust, is groundless.[1] The instincts and habits of the people all tend towards some of the more ordinary and more direct forms of political government. If Parliament will frankly accept this necessity, the issue will be fortunate. If it do not accept it, the movement will go on in spite of it. Should a great popular statesman ever arise, like Cromwell he will desire to govern with a Parliament if it will let him, but, like Cromwell, he will not be tolerant of a Parliament of Barebones.

[1] I am afraid this will be the more probable result of a mere extension of the franchise, carried out in the most guarded and dexterous way to promote conservative interests.

It would require a volume to answer or even to state all the possible objections that can be urged against this proposal, which amounts, in fact, to nothing more than this—that Parliament should constitute itself an ultimate appeal and control in legislation, and withdraw from the direct assumption of ministerial duties. There are grave objections possible to every proposal in politics. But in this case, as in others, it turns on a balance of advantages and evils. There are those who set store by the direct control which Parliament exerts over the servants of the public. It is a balance of advantages. You cannot make two authorities simultaneously responsible. If Parliament chooses to be its own Home Minister, it robs the minister of all sense of duty and responsibility, and reduces him to the place of a clerk. What would become of the army in Abyssinia if Sir Robert Napier were obliged to spend his nights in justifying every petty order of the day to a supreme military council, or what would become of us, if Sir Richard Mayne could not arrest a Fenian without a party fight in an assembly of 658 metropolitan inspectors of police? A minister who has to wrangle out every administrative detail and every turn of a clause is necessarily not a minister, but an attorney.

It is much the fashion to console ourselves with thinking that our system of parliamentary procedure, cumbrous and dilatory as it may be, insures that the uttermost dregs of opinion shall be stirred and sifted; that nothing can become law until the most perverse objections of the most ignorant obstruction have been

ground to powder beneath Alps and Andes of accumulated talk, until not the darkest corner in the thickest brain in the community remains yet to be enlightened. It is a proud boast, but it seems simply another mode of saying that Government shall always be in arrear of the dullest mind in the nation. So, too, the verdict waits till the obstinate juryman gives in. So the democratic aristocracy of Poland had each man his *liberum veto*.

All these objections in the main resolve themselves into one—the claim of every citizen to have his part in the management of the State. This, however, is simply democracy, which in its true form is equivalent to government by the incompetent, and government by talk. Beautiful in theory and fascinating in practice as this is, the object of this paper is to ask if it may not be bought at too high a price. The task before the Government of this country is growing each day more serious. This island is in a position less assuring than any which she has held during the present century. Most of the other nations of Europe, with no doubt much that is oppressive, have at least an efficient machinery of government of high scientific completeness. Into their civil system, as much as the military, arms of precision have been regularly introduced. Into our civil system they have not been introduced. Our cumbrous Parliamentary Executive is the Brown Bess of government, which veterans and martinets of the service may admire, but which really leaves us at the mercy of the improved system of the age. Or if in other nations the governing machine is still in-

effective, they have not lost, as we have, the very tradition or taste for efficient government. We never needed it so much. The difficulties before us, both within and without, were never so great. They cannot be touched without a hand at once strong, trained, and inflexible. The disease will yield to nothing but force, and a resolute use of the knife. The quacks are they who boast that they can draw the most obstinate teeth without the slightest pain. The gospel of *laissez-faire* is exhausted. Separated in Europe from any serious alliance or bond with any of the nations, and with the gigantic preparations of the great empires for the impending struggle (1868), there is scarcely a single object in Europe, not even the protection of Constantinople, for which this country could make her will felt.[1] Our vast inorganic empire beyond seas has been established with marvellous vigour, and administered not without success. But India alone strains our capacity to the utmost. Like the rest of our empire, it will now have to be held under somewhat new conditions. The suppression of a people in latent rebellion in Ireland continues, but without relief, and they are sanguine who think that time, bayonets, and *laissez-faire* are sufficient to suppress them. Each year America is growing in material strength, and a few years only will make her an irresistible rival to England in material resources. Nor can the risk of war be forgotten. Thus perils and difficulties are gathered from every

[1] This was indeed proved true during the great war of 1870–71, and the contemptuous repudiation by Russia of the Black Sea treaty obligations.

side. Without allies, with a scattered empire, with latent enmity in America, one of the three kingdoms in permanent rebellion, the social diseases to be dealt with acquire a fresh importance, and the future of England is not safe in the hands of parliamentary cabals.[1]

If the great aristocracy which has governed this country for two centuries has any life in it, it will look to these things, and seriously consider how the safety and greatness of England are for the future to be secured. They must know in their hearts that by feats of parliamentary gymnastics that end is not much longer attainable. There is now an intellectual and a material solvent which have combined their forces. Parliament, under this impulse, might resume its true functions under the constitution as the deliberative council, the representative of opinions, the ultimate appeal, the sole source of pecuniary supply. The assumption of actual executive sovereignty is an anomaly, an absurdity, and in these days a danger. The accession of the people to power, untainted with the passion for parliamentary distinctions, just gives the material leverage which makes action possible.

[1] This perhaps is now (1875) of more pressing moment than it was in 1868, although the great American difficulty has been in the meantime settled by the skill or the subserviency of Mr. Gladstone's Alabama diplomacy. It is satisfactory to feel it is over, even at such a price. *Factum valet, fieri non debet.* But feeble prudence is perhaps better than feeble insolence.

ESSAY III.

THE POLITICAL FUNCTION OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

[THE following Lecture was delivered on March 25, 1868, at the request of the London Trades Council to a public meeting convened by that body, and was subsequently printed and published on their behalf. The Lecture, with omissions, is printed as it was uttered. It will sufficiently appear that the Lecturer, at least, did not advocate Democracy to the London workmen.]

ON the eve after some great battle it is but seldom that its meaning and result are manifest to those who have been most closely engaged. The true issue of a battle turns not on the material loss of the wounded and the slain, but on the moral condition of those who survive. As night came down upon the field of Sadowa, when for once and all the North German met the South German, how few there were that night in either host who really knew what had been done. Thousands had fallen on both sides; two vast armies were, for the moment, almost equally crippled; the Austrians were still at the first line of their defences, with their great empire untouched behind them, and their famous fortresses unshaken. The master of three kingdoms and twenty provinces, and of half a million of brave and disciplined troops did not seem absolutely

at the mercy of his foe. But those who could have looked forward into the future, if any there were, might have seen that in fact it was so. That one day of battle had really decided the rivalry of centuries, and the future of Germany. Not by the blood and treasure which had been poured out upon the field, not by the skill of a general, or the influence of chance, but by the temper in the Prussian army and people, the determination to conquer, the conviction that they *must* conquer, the knowing distinctly *how* and *why* they meant to conquer. For armies conquer not by their numbers, but by their *morale*; and they only *win* victories who know how to *use* victories.

Something of this kind must occur on the morrow of the great battle of Parliamentary Reform. It was not in the midst of the dust and din of conflict, that the true issue could be seen by the combatants or their leaders. It is not even now that it can be seen, when the very authors of the change will speak of it in the most different language; and one man calls it a Conservative idea, and the other calls it a Revolution. Nor is it indeed merely that the issue is difficult to foresee. The issue is not yet determined. It can be determined only by the temper of those who are engaged. It rests with you to answer that question. As you act, so will the result of Reform eventually prove—almost nothing if you waste your opportunities; virtual revolution if you use them. For you have *won* no franchises unless you have wisdom to *use* them.

And therefore it is that I take it as one of the healthiest signs of the times, that everywhere the

political associations which agitated for the Bill have been holding conferences, drawing up a basis of future action, and meeting to exchange ideas in council-room, or lecture-hall, in order to satisfy their minds of what it behoves them to do. And thus it is that I have come forward with very great pleasure at the request of your Council to add my mite to the exchange of ideas. I shall not ask your leave to speak my thoughts on this subject with perfect openness, for I feel sure that in inviting me here, you have imposed that upon me as an obligation. But I must ask you for a patient hearing, if some things I say may appear, as I am afraid they must appear, strange and distasteful. I speak only for myself; I can compromise no one; I have not been asked to come here to take one side or the other. Having steadily held aloof, and intending to hold aloof, from all direct political action, what I say must necessarily lack much of that unity and force which belong only to men who work heart and soul with a party. I have had no part in the great movement which has given you the suffrage, and therefore I am not the best person perhaps to do ample justice to that movement. Take your practical plans for the campaign from those who have so boldly led you to victory. And bear with me if I seem wanting in heart in the cause, whilst I humbly but very frankly submit to you the thoughts which strike the dispassionate eye of a bystander.

Now first let us ask ourselves soberly and critically, like sensible men who do not care to deceive themselves, what has the Reform Bill done? Let us avoid

all throwing up of caps, and what they call 'buncombe' on the other side of the Atlantic. I am not about to disparage the great change which the Bill has introduced. Still it is obvious that that which has filled a Tory Government with pride and hope cannot be quite so unmitigated a triumph of the people. It is no doubt certain that very large numbers of working men will be brought upon the register by means of the act. Perhaps it is true that if they all polled, and all voted unanimously, they would command a clear majority not only in the constituencies of the kingdom, but in the House of Commons itself. But Reforms, like battles, are won not by numbers but by *wills*. When we reflect on the mysterious force which social influence and wealth command, the monstrous inequality in the distribution of seats, the skill of the old parties in managing elections, we may well pause before we indulge in very extravagant vaunts about a numerical majority. Remember all that has yet to be done, in revising the miserable ratepaying clauses of the Act, in dealing with the shameful system of bribery, in reducing the franchise in counties, in protecting the independence of the voter, in really grappling with the distribution of seats, and it seems as if a fresh lifetime of agitation in Electoral Reform were still awaiting a new generation before us, as if all had to be done over again, and the franchise itself were but a toy. 'Our new masters,' cry some to you; 'a clear majority of the seats are yours,' say others. Well it may be so! but I think you will be satisfied if for the present you return but a tenth part of the People's

House consisting of pure and *bonâ fide* men of your choice. How many men of your own order do you expect for the present to send up to Westminster? How many years yet do you think it will be before constituencies are divided into equal electoral districts? How long yet before a rich man and a poor man will stand at the hustings on an equal footing? Truly for our new masters your expectations are most moderate, most modest.

No! I believe and trust that those who hear me have too much sense to be indulging in any extravagant notion that they have suddenly been thrust into thrones, and are absolute masters of the British Constitution. Do I mean to imply, then, that no change has been made? A great change in many ways. There is, first, the great fact that even now, according to the law, in strict theory you are a real working majority; and if you all knew your own minds, and were resolved to have your way, nothing could hinder you from having it. Theoretically I say, because as a rule people do not know their own minds, and are always meeting other people who kindly undertake that task for them. But still this plain fact is a great deal, even though it exist in theory and is not likely to exist in practice. There it is—your strict legal right and power to modify the frame of law from top to bottom. And if you ever did by a miracle resolve as one man, resolve as Cromwell's men did, that the Irish Church,[1] or the English Church, or the system

[1] The majority did resolve as to the first, and did it in 1869. The other two adjourned *sine die*.

of entail in land should be abolished, the law would take its course, and abolished they each and all would be.

Now if we put all these elements together to what do they amount? They point I think to this—that a great *moral* result has been produced, though not, I am inclined to think, a great material success—a result not perhaps very easy to define—the value of which has yet to be worked out by yourselves, and which from its very nature can be estimated only in the future, and not in the present.

I am thus careful to insist that the change which has been made is chiefly one affecting the *tone* of public affairs, because it seems to me that if this is not effected, little worth having has been gained. For my part, if I thought the old machinery of legislation was to go on hereafter in the same conventional mill that we have known, I should think all that has been done towards Reform was a positive nuisance. How do you think you would be profited by the barren name of elector, by returning members from unwieldly constituencies, if all else is to remain much as it was before; if reckless outlay in elections, or local jealousies, are to bring but a new class into the area of corruption; if the same palsy is to fall on men in office; if the intricate game of parliamentary debating is still to be played, with the addition only of a few novices to share it; if local interest and the sham freedom of local self-government is to make all social legislation impracticable; if Cabinets are still to play lackey to parliamentary parties, and parliamentary parties are still to

play lackey to powerful houses, or some disciplined band of self-seekers; if the weary swaying back and fro in committees is to be permanent; if the art of government is to consist in the art of inventing excuses; if Parliament is to be a mere prize competition for speech makers; if public life is to remain the mere art of getting on in life, by saying as much as possible and doing as little as possible? Of all delusions into which the new electors could fall the greatest would be this, that they, or any direct representatives of theirs, are at once to prove adepts at that ingenious parliamentary game in which honourable and right honourable members have been trained from birth for generations. Once accept and try to adapt yourselves to that artificial system which I will call 'parliamentarism'; and you will be as powerless in the State as the small farmers as a class are now. Do you not suppose that they will beat you at the game—both you and your leaders? Do you not see how completely parliamentary manœuvres have become a matter of special art, how thoroughly the governing classes have studied the trick of hand, how if a member wishes to be heard he must before all things 'catch the ear' of the House, that is, school and practise his mind exactly to the conventional type of plausible good sense: and then after studying how to be judicious for many years he may at last catch the tone of official life, and when he is minister he must catch the tone of parties, and judiciously bring in his neat, safe little measures? What a familiar picture to us is this life in the House of Commons. A question of great public interest has

been talked over for years and years, and every one knows perfectly what should be done. At last some judicious aspirant embodies it in a judicious little bill just timidly nibbling at the question, and hedging it round with all sorts of qualifications. And then he goes round to several judicious persons in the House, one of whom tells him that the 'House' will be afraid of that clause, and another that this clause is unprecedented, and then that this clause is rather too sweeping. So the poor little Bill gets docked, and twisted, and pulled about, and all the little life in it is squeezed out; and then some very judicious speeches are made *pro* and *con*, and everybody declares it is a most important question, and ought to be considered, and a great deal of clever talking *at* each other goes on, the whole subject being utterly ignored all the while; and then it goes into committee, and more talking and paring and compromising goes on upon the clauses; and then the lawyers or the publicans, or some other meritorious class, discover that their interests are prejudiced by the bill, and they shall oppose it to death. So then members are caught in the lobby and warned that if they vote for the bill they will lose the lawyer or the publican interest at their next election, and then somebody succeeds in getting the House counted out, and the minister of the day, in sweet constraining phrases, suggests that this important subject should be referred to a select committee upstairs; and then upstairs they go, and ten times more lobbying, and paring, and compromising, and talking goes on than ever went on below, and the lawyers and the publicans

are quite menacing, and hang about the galleries like savage dogs, and the poor legislators get very much harassed by the London season and the constant goading of the lawyers and the publicans, and then it gets very hot and uncomfortable in town, and some one whispers into the ear of the promoter of the Bill that he will be thought 'impracticable' in the House if he goes on, and 'impracticable' is an awful word, enough to damn any man in the House of Commons; and then members get up and 'implore' the hon. member to withdraw his bill at this late period of the session, as if the hon. member were doing something quite improper; so at length the poor little Bill, all mutilated and wrangled over, is withdrawn, and the hon. member goes off to shoot on the moors, quite proud of having been so judicious and of having shown so much business-like capacity, with a lurking satisfaction to think that his poor little bill will do over again just as well next session. Now, they call that legislation, and that is parliamentary government. Do you think that you or any real representatives of yours are ever likely to be adepts at that art? Do you think you or they can 'catch the tone' of the House, and be true to yourselves still? Is that the kind of legislation, is that the type of government which satisfies you? Truly I think you do not so much need to 'catch the tone of the House' as utterly to transform it.

Now it rests with you, and you alone to purge the Constitution of this country from this deep-seated disorder of 'Parliamentarism.' No one here I trust

will imagine (I daresay persons outside will be very ready to suggest it) that I mean anything so preposterous as the destruction of the power of the House of the Commons, and its position in the Constitution. But I say that around Parliamentary Government there has grown up an artificial system of procedure which has well nigh crushed all the life out of it. And if Parliamentary government is to become a reality, 'Parliamentarism' must be extinguished. Parliament from a mere deliberative assembly has developed a whole code of rules, ideas, and ways which bear no relation to the art of government whatever. The other day I saw a list of the various administrations for a little over a century past. They number thirty-six, which is about one every three years. Is not that one single fact enough to stamp the whole system with unreality? For real government, such as complex social difficulties require, years and years of continuous labour by the same mind, a lifetime of thought and watchfulness would barely suffice. No man with only three years of office before him would dream of dealing with truly national questions. Yet for more than a century, the average of office is but three years, and sometimes it is little more than three months. Does not this alone explain the helplessness and stagnation of Government? But what were they doing during these three years of brief official enjoyment? Governing? Zealously preparing measures of public utility? No! for the most part wrangling with each other, battling from side to side, like advocates in a court, arousing the excitement

of factions, and winning party triumphs by well-timed manœuvres of State.[1]

Does it not strike you that the whole system is a mere excrescence upon Government, and exists simply as a happy hunting ground for lawyers, rhetoricians, and tacticians, where they can run down their game according to the rules provided, and which has nothing to do with your welfare, or that of the country? What makes a man Under-Secretary of State? Debating power. What makes a man minister? Debating power. And what makes a man Premier? Debating power. And what good is debating power to you? what has it ever done for you or for England? The system has created a special profession, called public life, for one artificial order—the governing classes. It bears the same relation to governing, that tournaments did to fighting. When the knights of the middle ages were being supplanted in the battle field, they took to fighting tournaments, and a very pretty kind of sport they invented, to which many of them devoted their lives, gained great glory, and won many prizes, with no conceivable result but that of gratifying their own vanity and vain glory. So when Parliament became the real supreme power in the State it soon began to develop a very elaborate sport, a sort of political tournament, which only the special class could acquire, and in which the performers could win great fame and profit, without the remotest good to

[1] This is strong language, but it will be remembered it was used in 1868 *before* the great *moral* change caused by the Reform. Such language was true of the old epoch.

anybody. But the Paradise of carpet knights has come to an end, as the Paradise of talkers must end also some day. You tolerate no longer the sport of military tournaments. How long will you tolerate political tournaments?

Those who have hitherto held power and who have been brought up under this state of things are so little conscious of its worthlessness, and are so profoundly interested in watching or joining in the game, that little chance of amendment can ever be expected from them. But I trust that those who have been excluded from the system, are not yet quite bewitched by its attractions. Your part is to see that the work of practical government shall be made bolder, broader, and more energetic. Insist that this endless wrangling and debating shall cease. Deliberation up to a point to satisfy the mind is essential, but discussion for the mere sake of the discussion, with the mere view of showing how beautifully men can discuss, and such are ninety-nine hundredths of Parliamentary speech-making, is of all things the most destructive of action and of work. Insist that this mystifying and dreary revision of details shall end. Details of course there must be, but the work of revising details is the last work in the world that can be properly carried on by a crowd, or what is even worse, by a large talking assembly. A body of men, large or small, may be a very proper power to determine principles and to clothe acts with authority. But it is the first condition of real business—of all business, not of political business alone—that to give efficient form to predetermined principles,

the concentration and persistence of individual minds is absolutely needed. Three-fourths of the business of the House of Commons is just that which it ought never to undertake, and thus it comes that a trumpery gas bill, or poor rates' bill, which a responsible minister could properly dispose of in a week, occupies the House during all the session, fills cartloads of reports, and comes out mangled and distorted at the end, as it pleased some powerful interest to alter it, or as some dexterous debater has managed to make it. And whilst the House has been debating and shifting the clauses of the gas bill, the precious time has been lost in which great Imperial questions could be dealt with, the very power of dealing with them has been lost at the same time; and with the well-known phrases about 'This late period of the Session,' and 'the press of public business before the House,' the very suggestion of dealing with them is bowed out of Court.

What you have to impress upon political action is that this enfeebling system of detail and compromise shall end. It must be yours to insist on a greater individual responsibility. A principle once adopted, proper instruments must be found to work out all its consequences, and embody it in technical form, swiftly, and systematically, on the personal responsibility of the agent employed. It must be yours to see that great national questions shall be no longer shirked, or glossed over, or nibbled at, but faced and *solved.* Year after year the great questions of education, or of the Irish Establishment, or of Irish land-laws are

talked about, dallied over, and disposed away. They have occupied of deliberation and discussion probably as much mental activity as sufficed to govern the whole Roman Empire of the Antonines for a generation. And they are all just as far off efficient settlement as ever. Once speak the word, like men who will not be gainsaid, and they will all be settled in three months.[1]

Throughout the whole sphere of legislation insist that action be vigorous, complete, and real. If no action is possible, if further knowledge is required, wait, do not act at all, think, but do not talk. But when the time for action has come, act with a will and a heart. If you see that a thing should be done, do it in the name of common sense and don't play with it. Don't go on, or suffer anyone to go on as if all that was necessary was to *seem* to do it. Above all, if you find a party manœuvre brewing up to thwart it, or a private interest standing in the way, crush it out mercilessly as you would a beetle. Never mind 'the right honourable gentleman's feelings,' or 'the temper of this or that side of the house,' don't be frightened by the 'large and important interests' at stake, or that the measure is 'unprecedented,' or 'uncalled for.' Don't refer it to a select committee, and above all things don't let it go before a Royal Commission. But if you think it is not right—leave it alone. If you think it is right—do it, or have it done.

I would sum up in a word, the element which it is

[1] They *were*, after a fashion, settled in two sessions, 1869 and 1870, entirely under the impetus of the popular Reform.

your part to bring into English politics—it is the Revolutionary element. Now I use this word in its true sense, not as meaning violence or anarchy, or disorder of any kind, but the vigorous adaptation of old social elements to new conditions. The materials of our whole social and political fabric have long been growing more and more disorganised. They are unworthy of their tasks. Let it be yours not to destroy them, or to ignore them—but to recast them. Question after question has been gathering up and waiting for its answer in vain. Church establishments, the work of education, the condition of the poor, the tenure of the land, the state of the rural labourer, the growth and incidence of taxation, the standing army, the whole framework and administration of law, the sanitary administration, the management of public works,—these are all matters in which the old machinery is used up. These great matters of public necessity are accumulating a burden of duties and of tasks to be performed. They cannot be touched but by a hand that cannot be resisted, and that will not be turned. They need swift, energetic, uncompromising efforts. There is not here any old-fashioned grievance to be rid of, it is not a chartered monopoly, or a bit of class privilege to be abolished. These were the tasks of the old times and these were the triumphs, and the legitimate triumphs of the parliaments of the past: our difficulties are those of construction, not of destruction. We have no mere nuisance to extinguish, but new and appropriate conditions to be found for deep and complicated diseases

of the State. To deal with such are needed broad, comprehensive, deep-searching, yet rapid and potent remedies. Such changes in State policy are called revolutions—revolutions it may be most orderly, most beneficent, most moderate, but revolutions because effecting vast complex and permanent changes. And from whom can come the impulse for such changes, if not from you?

Now the question is in what way you can best introduce this new spirit into politics. I sum up the answer by saying,—through increased power accompanied by increased responsibility. Choose the best men you can find for your representatives, and then trust them heartily, and strengthen their hands. If you are satisfied that Mr. Mill or Mr. Bright are really capable of serving you, stand by them like one man and make them a power in the State. Let no petty criticism on details, let no local divergence of opinion draw you off the main point. Choose men who know their own minds, and then give them their head. In politics you cannot have a truly superior leader, whom you are to check and criticise and tutor at every step. Nor can you have one who is simply the mouth-piece of every noisy clique. For if this were so, he would cease to be a superior man, and would be simply one of ourselves. The dense Conservative party knew this long ago. They have trusted Lord Palmerston, and since then Mr. Disraeli, for years. They differed from both of them on many points. They could not understand them altogether. But they trusted them and made them predominate, and thus it comes that for

one long administration a sort of Conservative-Liberalism, and since then a sort of Liberal-Conservatism has been absolute master of the situation.[1] Now do you find out patiently, critically, and thoughtfully your own natural leaders and guides, and having found them, stick by them, accept them, and make them strong. Not let me say blindly and slavishly. If you feel that they prove false or weak, cast them off sorrowfully but resolutely. But whilst they prove true take them as a whole, grapple them to your hearts with links of steel, and follow them as soldiers on a campaign follow the captains whom they trust.

Choose the best Parliament you can, and having chosen it, trust it. So long as you find it seriously determined to talk no longer, but to act, vigorously bent on honestly settling great national questions, stand by it and strengthen its hands to the utmost. Forbear to be constantly fretting the mouth of the horse that carries you. Help the Parliament to extinguish the wearisome criticism of details. If parties try to lead it into false issues, sweep them away. If personal interests crop up to embarrass it, silence them. Keep constantly before the great council of the nation the great questions. Force them to choose energetic ministers. Force those ministers to carry out measures to an issue. Let details of administration, and the practical application of principles be entrusted to the most honest and capable men of action you can find. Leave them free and give them power. See that their work is honestly and thoroughly done, and when you

[1] And yet again (1875).

are satisfied that it is so done, ratify and enforce it without another word.

But whatever else may be done, insist first that that power which claims to govern in this country, whether it be Parliament, or Cabinet, or class, shall really take in hand the pressing questions which concern Government. You are the first to feel the great wants of the country. Make them felt by society. Make them urgent matters for the State. Wrangling over gas bills, and tripping up right honourable gentlemen out of their own speeches in Hansard may be a fascinating game to those who play it. But you want measures, and should insist on measures being found. When the first national assembly of the great French Revolution were perorating daily and nightly about privileges and rights, the starving women of Paris broke into the astonished house with the cry of 'Bread! Bread! not so many long speeches.' To substitute the action of opinion for violence, and acts of Parliament instead of bread, you may in a metaphor suppose yourselves to be knocking at the doors of Parliament and crying 'Measures! measures! not so many long speeches.'

You should be, by your habits and institutions, the class who are the most fitted to see and act upon this truth. In your trade societies, and your other associations you have found the necessity of acting in large masses, of standing legally by the majority, of acting with decision, concentration and responsibility. You have acquired the instinct of trusting your leaders, of clothing them with free powers of action in order to

place them under a more real responsibility. You know how the success of every movement depends on the double action of the mass and of the agent, the mass supplying breadth and energy of principle, your agent giving it concentration and unity. Carry the same temper from your unions into the region of politics. And let your watchwords be 'confidence in tried leaders,' and 'loyal co-operation each with all.'

You who have had practical experience of its results are not likely to be caught by the cant which is so dear to the commercial and a portion of the literary class, the cant about self-government and non-legislation. Local self-government is a very grand thing in theory, but in practice as here understood, it comes as you all know, to obstructiveness, jobbery, no responsibility, and no government. What has self-government ever done for you? How are you profited by local parochial and municipal self government because a number of men in professions and trades, most of them as individuals unfit to govern anything more important than their own counting-houses, have made themselves active for a little self-interest, or vain glory? Of what good is it to you or to your neighbours that a certain knot of busy bodies in your parish have manipulated the rates as best suited themselves, starved the paupers down to the last basin of gruel, and jobbed and intrigued with contractors, builders, companies, and agents. Local self-government, as at present practised, is but too often local oppression, and local fraud. From the nature of the thing it must fall into the hands of pushing men of

capital and business. You have enough to do in dealing with them in your private relations with them. Beware of entrusting them also with the absolute control over the building of your cities, the protection of your health, with the maintenance of your poor and your infirm, with the management of your public works. For real and efficient control over this, look to the State. Fear not over-legislation. The name of local self-government stands but too often for local mis-government and local no-government. Far better to have one incapable ruler than fifty incapable rulers. From the State at least you can expect a higher experience and skill, national publicity, greater concentration of power, a more Imperial aim and spirit, and far more true responsibility.

Still less is it likely that you will be deluded by the strange paradox of some minds, the grand principle of no-government. Keep order they say, and leave everything else to unrestricted competition and self-management. Leave the weak at the mercy of the strong, leave the ignorant to teach themselves, leave the pauper to feed himself, leave the holders of privileges the free enjoyment of their rights, leave the administration of justice in its time-honoured confusion, leave Ireland to starve and rebel, rebel and starve, leave the peasant in his misery, leave every one who profits by a corrupt system to make the most of it for himself. It is not true that everything which has to be removed by legislation is already destroyed. Our system is most artificial, every side of it is the creation of old class law. We live in a perfect network of

legislative trammels which the past has imposed upon the present; trammels the more obvious parts of which have been thrown off by the middle class themselves; whilst the parts which reach down to the depths of society have still to be examined and recast.

I can quite understand how distasteful much of this will seem to those who cherish the principle of pure democracy. But if pure democracy mean the direct management of public affairs by the people themselves, I confess myself no democrat. I prefer to call myself republican, by which I understand the devotion of the services of all citizens equally to the common welfare of the State. By republicanism I mean the most efficient governing power which the State can produce. By democracy, the weakening of that efficiency by incompetent control. If I thought that the tendency of the recent changes or of future changes was to be to throw the conduct of government into the hands of the masses, I should regard it as a change for the worse. The bitter cup of pure democracy (and by that I mean the direct interference of a whole multitude or order in government) has been drunk to the dregs, first by the aristocratic and then by the middle class. There are such things as noble as well as trading democracies, of which Poland of old and Florence were the prominent types. They each in their turn have reduced government and progress to a dead-lock, each individual, each clique, each citizen, each class alternately claiming to regulate affairs. Do you profit by the warning they give. Prove yourselves superior to the small vanity and wilfulness of insisting on direct

interference in legislation. 'The people shall manage their own concerns' is the dull stereotyped dogma of the middle class radical. I trust it will never be yours. I have been warned with pathetic and almost paternal remonstrance that I run the danger of seeming to flatter the people. I am not going at any rate to flatter now; for I tell you plainly, that in my opinion if the people were to manage their own concerns they never would be worse managed. Manage your own concerns for yourselves! Do you ever make your own boots and shoes, or turn your own engine-driver on a railway, or cut off your own leg when amputation is inevitable? If we all managed our own concerns for ourselves we should be reduced to a state of the merest savages. Civilisation simply means the adjustment of parts to the most efficient hands—putting the round men in the round holes. We get our law done by men trained all their lives to the work. We get taught by professed teachers, we have our armies led by experienced and scientific generals. And if in all things of life great and small we rely on men of special gifts and attainments, and know that even they can do us no good service unless we entrust them with full freedom of action and concentration of power, how can we venture to dispense with these advantages in the greatest and most difficult art of all—the art of government? What would be the result if the passengers in a train insisted on turning this or that handle of the engine in the course of the journey, if we insisted on substituting one drug for another in a physician's prescription, if the operations of an army

in the field were directed by the votes of the rank and file? Yet these are comparatively easy to the art of government, especially in these days. Of all quacks distrust most those who tell you that it is an easy thing to govern such a country as ours. The government which we require consists in the work of recasting an immense accumulation of effete laws, and devising appropriate remedies for complex and deep-seated evils. What task can be harder, or require more undivided attention and special qualifications? Take an individual instance. The whole system of law and justice awaits consolidation and revision. What possible means have the people of doing this for themselves? No one of them alone would venture to draw his own lease, or plead his own cause on a trial. But what special gift of prophecy will enable a crowd of such men to accomplish it together? Then there is the tenure of land and the whole system of entail in this country and in Ireland. How could the people efficiently direct the required modifications, a system which but one man in a thousand could technically explain, and not one man in 10,000 can trace out into the practical results? Take each one of the tasks of the practical statesmen—the vexed problems of our social system. Which of us is prepared to profess himself a competent master of the subject? And in what way is collective wisdom to result from the accumulation of individual ignorances? If one unlettered man cannot do a sum in arithmetic, is it likely that 50 or 50,000 unlettered men *can* do it?

It has been a trite objection to extending the

franchise that it would extend the evils of pure democracy. This is simply impossible. The evils of pure democracy have been already pushed by the classes who have hitherto held power until it is absolutely impossible to extend them any further. Democracy consists not in the wealth or rank of the ruling class, but in the meddling by a crowd of incompetent persons in affairs for which they are unfit. I trust that the present movement will be a great step back from democracy. I look to the people to feel the vital and pressing necessity for great and radical action, to recognise the necessity of effecting it by the instrument of tried and trained ministers, to have sufficient self-control and discipline to join in vigorous sympathy with those leaders when they find them.

You will not misunderstand me (however I may be misrepresented) that I mean to counsel you to a slavish surrender to an Imperial will. We are not capable as a body of efficient administration of affairs. But they can be administered only by our constant, intelligent, and earnest co-operation. Once more I repudiate the reforms of a beneficent despotism, for they can be but momentary if they are forced on a reluctant people. At every step and stage I urge you to keep a watchful and enlightened guard. Find your leaders for yourselves, keep them firm to the objects that are needed, be one with them on all the principles at stake, follow and sift and test them at their work, exact from them an unqualified responsibility. Strengthen their hands so long as you feel you can

trust them; and when you feel that you cannot, replace them by better men.

Your function, in a word, is not to rule but to supply the motive to rule. Not to control methods, but to insist upon results; not to dictate to mere tools, but to follow the lead of the men of your choice. In the old days of the English Revolution, when in the turmoil of the long wars the Court of Chancery was blocked by arrears of untried causes, and suitors were groaning over the delays and technicalities of the judges of the old system, the great Cromwell, our true type of a revolutionary statesman, chose out the ablest lawyer he could find, directed him to try all causes in Chancery with immediate despatch, and by his side he set two keen and stalwart majors of horse, to *see that the business was done.* The great lawyer had the sole responsibility in determining the law, but lest he should be somewhat dilatory in his way of giving judgment, his military assessors were there to refresh his activity. The gallant officers did not meddle with the judgments, but they took good care that judgments were given. A type this, I sometimes think, of the revolutionary method. And you, too, I sometimes think, may in these days not unfitly play the part of those military assessors. Find the best man you can to do the administrative work; leave him free and make him responsible, but sit, the embodiment of force, beside him, tell him the work he has to do, see that he does it to the best of his power, and make his work respected when he has done it.

You will gather from what I have been saying that I would counsel the people to devote their political energy not so much to the machinery as to the results of legislation. There are those whose sole idea of popular participation in the State consists in an endless vista of agitation to perfect the process by which members of Parliament are returned. An extension of the franchise they say is nothing without the ballot, the ballot must be followed by equal electoral districts, and this by Triennial Parliaments—and then perhaps the representation of majorities is after all only to pave the way to the representation of minorities, the reflecting of every sect in the country, and perhaps of every individual mind—and then ultimately in the far distance we are promised a vision of a Promised Land, a Paradise in which manhood suffrage itself is to become a horrible and tyrannical abuse, and the lion shall lie down with the lamb, and widow, wife, and spinster shall stand upon a platform of equal human electoral rights. Thus, politics become an everlasting kaleidoscope of new combinations and ideals, all of which are but to prepare the way for an absolutely perfect representative machine. But in the meantime what is to become of the great evils for which this machine is only the means? I am far from saying that there is not very much which is required to complete the reform of the suffrage, without a real redistribution of seats, a real change, such, for instance, as should give a preponderant part of the representation to the great towns and entirely abolish the small towns, and, at the same time, without stringent measures to prevent bribery,

corruption, and intimidation of the voters; without some such measures as these the Reform Act will prove a mockery. But whilst we determine to hold to these, let us concentrate our efforts on the great ends we aim at. Let us not forget that the most faultless piece of political machinery is little better than clockwork when compared with a wise and powerful public opinion, that it is through their influence or opinion that the force of the people is felt, and that it is in forming opinion that their true function consists. In every form of government conceivable the great power will always be actually exercised (whatever the institution in force), first by those who make politics a profession, and then generally by the class which has wealth, leisure, and cultivation. But of all modern forms of government, of all institutions almost in history, our own system is perhaps that which by its complexity, its artificial and traditional character, and the extraordinary development of the rhetoric of Parliament, gives the largest field to the professional politician, to the rich aristocracy of this country, and makes it most difficult for the people to take the working of it into their own hands. But not only is this influence on opinion far the most available mode in which you can control politics, but it is also by far the most healthy in its effects. Practical agitation, the struggles of parties, and the exigencies of administration, necessarily involve a certain sacrifice of principle, a certain personal interest and passion, which, however much we may disguise it, is ruinous to the highest sense of political duty. The practice

of political agitation is ever tending to degenerate into intrigue. The exercise of public opinion is ever tending to expand into the truly religious feeling of social obligation.

I take one striking instance of the ease and the power with which your influence might instantly be brought to bear. In the course of last autumn it began to be understood that this country had been silently committed to a distant and costly war with an African people of whom we knew nothing[1] but the name. It was a war of which ministers, journalists, and people had up to that time scouted the very idea, which no one but a few soldiers desired, for which no one really saw the necessity until the word to see it was passed round the official world—a war for a cause in which we were originally wrong, in which we had wilfully blundered, and for which this country had no single legitimate interest. A war more wanton, more wasteful, more hypocritical, even this country has seldom undertaken, this country which has its opium wars in China, and its silk wars in Japan, and its massacres of negroes in Jamaica, at least once in a generation—a war promoted solely by professional soldiers thirsting for distinction, supported by officials amongst us with some vague hope of sustaining the Imperial prestige, and justified and advocated to the nation by the sophistry and cant of parliament and the press. Well! had we done our duty then, and considered if this war were not a crime, a cruel aggression

[1] The Abyssinian war. I adhere to this, and should hold somewhat similar language about the Ashantee war (1875).

on a half-civilised race whom we must deliver over to anarchy if not to bloodshed, if your voice had been heard plainly and strongly, wherever men met in their workshops, in their homes, in their gatherings, and had made their government feel that it should not be, just as the French people at last made Napoleon feel that his Mexican aggression must cease, can any of us suppose that with a deep undercurrent of popular opposition, a vacillating ministry and pliable parliament would have dared to have added to the risk of possible humiliation in arms, the certainty of wasting million after million of our treasure, and all that our Indian Zouaves might have something to keep their hands in. But we did not form our opinion, we were talking about politics, but we were not talking politics and this wanton aggression went on.

So, too, throughout the whole sphere of our foreign policy, the influence of your opinion might be vast, immediate, and beneficent. Of all departments of State there is perhaps none in which so much free action must be left to the responsible minister, but yet there is none in which the general spirit of his action can be more efficiently guided by opinion. Form your own opinion and then make it felt upon the whole question of the aim of that Imperial System in the East. Ask yourselves seriously, how far is the interest of England, how far is it good for the human race, how far is it just to continue that policy of aggression on the Oriental races, breaking up the ancient monarchies of China and Japan, these endless wars first for one object and with one excuse, then with

another—excuses are never wanting. a flag trampled on, a merchant's clerk killed, a meddling consul put in prison, (who ever knew that Ahab wanted a good excuse against Naboth, or at any rate if he were in doubt, when did not Jezebel come in and find one for him?) Speak out plainly that this system of extending commerce at the cannon's mouth is profoundly repugnant to your sense of right and wrong, that your true interests have only to suffer by wild bursts of manufacturing expansion, withhold your money and blood from these unholy wars and they must cease. Speak out boldly and clearly too in favour of a policy in Europe of peace, of non-intervention, and non-aggression. Protest against any association of this country with the old schemes to bolster up the balance of power. Above all insist on friendly and fair dealing with the people of the United States, that republic of your brothers—brothers from whose close and just union with each other the future of the world has so much to hope, from whose enmities it has so much to fear.

Then to pass from foreign questions to home questions, the very first matter which stands awaiting your impulse is that of a national primary education. You are they to whom the vital necessity of this measure is daily brought home; it is your children who are growing up untaught and unimproving; it is from you alone that the force can be obtained to overcome the opposition of sectarian and local narrowness. Here again look to the State, and not to sects or orders within the State. "Put not your trust in the churches,

or the squires, or the guardians. Let us have the first elements of knowledge as the very conditions of the life of the citizen freely supplied by the State, uniform and completely co-extensive with the nation, under a central and responsible director, and open to the people without distinction of creed. The condition of the agricultural labourer, the irresponsible tenure of land, the abuses of the settlement system, of the tenant-at-will system, of the game laws—these are all matters on which you must formulate your opinion and insist on that opinion being carried into act.

I refrain from enlarging on these points here, because there is a yet more pressing and vital question before you, one in fact in which all these which I have mentioned are contained, the question of the day—the state of Ireland. It rests with you to insist that the settlement of those questions which have torn Ireland for centuries shall at last be boldly faced. The old spirit of ascendency by which a conquering minority have age after age held a nation in subjection is still strong and confident; the traditions of the English government, rich in memories of nothing but forcible repression and the maintenance of their own national system, are still too strong to give way; the devotion of the English middle class to its own economic dogmas and its trading interests, its intense repugnance to touch with the lightest fingers any one of the sacred privileges and ornaments of property, are still so inveterate that, in the words of Mr. Mill, 'There is no people in Europe who are so blind to the cause of Irish discontent as ourselves.' You who have had no part

at any rate in the landed system of the conquerors, or the exclusive system of the traders, who have no vested interest in State churches, or in laws of settlement; you who as a people have felt, if less lightly (yet more widely), the same bad laws and evil institutions which have ground your Irish brethern to the dust, and goaded them into rebellion; you who know what there is of national self-respect in the desire of the Irishman for recognition of the existence of his country as a nation—do you, now in this crisis, when the governing and commercial class of this country are half terrified by the spectre of rebellion into a step towards justice, are half stung by it into a spirit of sullen resistance—do you now in this crisis make your voice felt strongly on the side of justice; insist that the ancient imposture of the Established Church there shall fall to its prayers and prepare for a short shrift before it ceases to exist, as the earnest of a better time; insist that the method of settling the discontent of the Irish cultivator by the sardonic process of depopulation shall cease; ask for the Irish peasant and the Irish farmer the means of enjoying that which is his birthright, the full sense of property in the soil he tills; reject with indignation the cynical suggestions of rivalry between you and your Celtic brethren, respect their great qualities and many virtues, and honour them rather than accuse them for that undying love for their long-suffering country.

The Irish question has entered on the phase of discussion, and unless you make up your minds, and express them somewhat clearly, in the phase of

discussion it will long remain. There are not wanting critics to carp and cavil at every practical solution of a political problem. In politics there are always admirable reasons to be given for and against almost every conceivable proposal. And, in the House of Commons, there are always people ready to make admirable speeches even on the very worst of all reasons. So that as far as the material of discussion is concerned, it is quite capable of going on until Doomsday. There are those there who can take advantage of every vein of the prejudice and ignorance of men, and raise a shallow laugh at every suggestion of improvement, and one great organ of the press which daily exhausts the arts of sophistry in crying peace where there is no peace. Do you believe that there is peace or that there is likely to be peace? Do you believe that that island never was so prosperous, never so happy, never so well governed? Do you believe that a chronic rebellion of centuries is the work of American colonels, of Mr. Bright, of Mr. Mill? Sweep away these sneers with one strong word of common sense, retort the name of quack upon those who pretend to cure an obstinate disease with words, send up a new Parliament to Westminster, and give them this instruction—that they hold an Irish Session for the settlement of Irish grievances. Tell them to act and not to discuss. Tell them to make Ireland prosperous and contented; and if they cannot, to leave her destinies in the hands of the Irish people themselves.[1]

[1] If there was anything clear in the national mind of 1868, it was that these Irish questions should be settled—the upas-tree cut down. Had Mr. Gladstone been entrusted with the duty freely, it would perhaps

One word more and I have finished. Anxious as I am to impress on you that vigorous, real, and immediate legislation is required especially for Ireland now, I would not be supposed to be looking for overmuch from any political or legislative remedy. The great evils which we have to contend against are those of society, are those of our own shortcomings and ignorance, in a word, are moral and not political. It is the spirit in which we educate ourselves and our children, the temper in which we deal with our fellow-men, the sense of public duty which animates us throughout our lives, which really determines the greater part of the life of our neighbours and ourselves. Political movements, institutions, laws, and governments, after all, determine but the smaller part, and that part, for the most part, the least important. Surely your positions and your lives ought to teach this truth to you more powerfully than to any of us. What to you can compare with the health, comfort and good training of your families, the social feeling of your fellow workmen, the standard of intelligence and civilisation in the country you are citizens of? Yet in all these things how small must be the part which governments or laws can make or unmake. Political duties we all have, but moral and social duties we have of a far deeper and higher sort, and we shall perform our political duties best in so far as they are inspired and directed by those

have been done; but the blight of 'Parliamentarism' was too powerful; and the measures were cut down into timorous contrivances, the most earnest Reformers we have had for years were exhausted, and a fine wave of popular justice spent its force.

social duties. And of all the modes in which we may misread our political duties and bring them to naught, the surest is to exaggerate the effect of political remedies and to imagine that mankind can be made wise, or prudent, or brotherly, by acts of Parliament and political agitation.

It is quite right that we should put in the first rank of national necessities a broad and national system of education. But let us reflect for a moment how little even this, the first of political necessities, can affect us. It is a thing in its nature for the future, for the next generation, not for ours. It cannot teach us, it cannot affect adult men with the work of their daily lives before them. No! our education must come from ourselves, not from the State, from within not from without. Without it we cannot use the political power we have obtained, or take one step in future with safety. With this thought, and it embodies in a sentence all that I have to say, I bring this rambling discourse on things in general to a close, and I say that the political functions of the people consist for the most part in the formation of a living public opinion on the social and national questions of the day, and for that formation of public opinion the very first necessity is a patient, a constant, and complete self-education.

ESSAY IV.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM.

[BETWEEN the date of this Essay and the preceding a period of more than five years had elapsed. It was a period of great organic changes, associated with the Liberal administration of 1868. These repeated efforts had exhausted the party, without satisfying the nation. The Reaction had begun. The Essay expresses this general dissatisfaction. It was published in December 1873.]

NOVEMBER, we are told on the best authority, is sacred to the conceptions of the Cabinet; and few Novembers have ever had so critical a meaning for the Liberal party as that which has just concluded. There are two futures yet open to that Liberal party—a possible revival, a possible decay. On the one hand, the great tide of enthusiasm which bore Mr. Gladstone to power has long spent its force. In the reaction of lassitude, the discontented and the disenchanted are raising angry remonstrance. The victorious Liberal majority of 1868 had to compromise as well as to adjourn many a cause dear to its component sections, and now the causes which were compromised or adjourned are again setting up their claims. On the other hand, the great Conservative Revival is not yet installed. The recent borough elections, the municipal elections,

the School Board elections, do not show the Liberal party to be absolutely dead. Like the Ministry, it has suffered a heavy blow; it is not what it was, but it is still 'a going concern.' The majority of eighty is a thing of the past, but it will take many a Tory triumph to convert it into a minority, at least in this Parliament.

In this balance of forces everything depends on the energy of the leaders. It is possible yet to give to Liberal legislation a fresh term of life. The legislation of the last five years, if its fruits are at present of no gigantic proportions, has been cast in the mould of good purpose. It has served to keep alive the spirit of hope, and its failures have been due to pettiness and cowardice in tactics rather than to total want of strategy. The Government, as a whole, has shown too much of that temper which Mr. Kinglake attributes to Napoleon III.—a restlessness to attempt grand designs joined to a timorousness in the hour of execution. It has had its Mexican expedition into the education question, but it has not yet met with its Sedan. *Tout peut se rétablir* it may say, in a sense perhaps more true, and not so hopeless. There is yet time for recovery, but it is certainly the last time. If the process of disintegration goes on for another session, the Conservative Reaction will be an inevitable reality, and to all appearance it will be a long reality. It is not very dreadful to contemplate except to those whom it personally concerns; but when it comes the Conservative innings must be a very substantial thing, and few Liberals are likely to find it a very satisfactory

thing. If we can predict anything in politics, it is safe to say that the plans of the Liberal party, within the next few months, will decide the whole future of that Liberal party for many a long day.

Now what is it that marks so fatally the weakness of that which is called the Liberal party? It is a thing which is tacitly admitted by all members of the party alike, and so loudly is it proclaimed by the other side that it is rather a truism than a secret. In fact, as we all know, 'the great Liberal party' is cut in half. It consists of two sections but moderately welded together, with a joining, which every jerk and strain bursts open afresh. There are three parties in politics and not two; and the three are, Conservatives, Whigs, and the People. The latter two, when united, are completely a match for the first; but it is certain that singly each is the weaker. The great Conservative world is the world of all that pride and wealth and self-complacency, which in such a society as ours is certain to be a very large world and a very strong world. If it has no high hopes it has little ill-will. It has not the least desire to set the world right; and no wish at all to trouble its neighbours. It is satisfied with the social system as it is, and its aim is to keep it as it is. It is plain that this is a very powerful force in such a country and such a time as ours. It possesses, and must possess, a *vis inertiæ* which it requires a national heave to move.

But the second party which takes in the whole of that official liberalism, that professional liberalism, that propertied liberalism, which is by reason convinced

that to keep things as they are is the plainest sort of revolution,—this party is not to be lightly put aside. It has given the Liberal movement its discipline, its administration, and its knowledge. One must be a democrat of a foreign type to think that English democracy at any rate could have dispensed with its official leaders and its middle-class front rank.

But what, on the other hand, can these do alone? Conservatism falling back on the power of wealth, position, and comfort is a quite intelligible thing. But Liberalism doing this is a mere negation, a parody, and a contradiction. We are told that a great gulf is opening between the two ends of the Liberal party, that the Liberal of rank and wealth can have nothing in common with the mere privates of his own party, whom he looks on as Radicals; and he is urged with a candour only too transparent to clear himself at least from this degradation. He can clear himself, indeed, on very simple terms, but only of one kind. He can become a Tory, but that is all. He can of course sink, if he please, into the nameless ruck of the Squire Westerns and the Squire Alworthys, the masters of hounds, and the worthy justices, as the case may be, but there life for him ends. A Liberal magnate, a great Whig, who has lost the confidence of the nation, and ostentatiously cuts himself off from the people, is indeed a ridiculous being. For what does he exist, what does he want, whom does he lead? Whigs, be it said without offence, are only cunning Tories. They may want at heart much the same thing; but they are far too practical to invite a contest. Like the

king who supplanted Wat Tyler, they come out in a noble free-handed way and say 'We will be your king!' But what will become of the Whigs who should say, 'I have nothing for you, my good men?'

Official Whiggery, middle-class Liberalism, must have, or seem to have, the people at their back, or they are nonentities. What is the real strength of that aristocratic *élite* which feels itself superior to the blindness of its order? What of that long-headed respectability whose last word is compromise? In itself it is little enough. The long-headed and the superior ones are a very decided minority, and comfort, wealth, cowardice, and fashion, are ever hardening the well-to-do into practical obstructives. If, surrounded by such a host, the officer class of Liberalism are not visibly followed by a popular army, they are nothing. And on what easy terms can they gain the confidence of the people. Never hardly in any country or in any age have the political demands of the masses been so moderate, so just, so free from extravagance as those of the English people of this very day. The rhetorical panics of Conservative prophecy, the shrill epigrams of quarterly antipathy, get no support in facts. The notion that our working classes of any kind cherish designs against society and property, is the very delirium of ill-will and ignorance. There was never in England a generation, there is in Europe no labouring community, to whom ideas of 'social liquidation' are so utterly foreign. The International, which has numbered adherents by hundreds of thousands in other countries, cannot find its hun-

dreds here. The whole scheme of violent reconstruction by political centralisation fails to make a dint in the English mind. Did any reporter or observer ever tell us that he had heard in any genuine gathering of workmen, serious attacks on any single right of property? Is there a party in this island, amidst a hubbub of free speech, which in this day advances a programme remotely akin to violent revolution? Revolution is a ready phrase on the tongues and the pens of Conservative rhetoricians. But when squeezed into common sense, it means only that which Conservatives do not like, or reluctance to accept the Conservative elysium. In its destructive sense, revolution is an idea as alien to the political aspirations of our people, as the word is alien to their language. Go where you will amongst workmen in town or country, in trades unions, in clubs, and 'mass meetings,' and their talk is about Bills and Petitions and the sections of an Act, commissions of inquiry, and deputations to ministers. They are saturated with the Parliamentary dye, and an indignation meeting of costermongers will be sticklers for all the formulæ in Hansard, and will call 'order' and stand by the chair. The great social change which is involved in the spread of agricultural unionism has stirred deep feelings enough, has revealed suffering enough, and thrown up problems enough to have called up all the revolutionary passions if they lay in the genius of our age. But throughout the struggle, momentous as it has been, in a section of our people so little prepared, not a breath has ever stirred on those deep waters, of political insurrection,

nay, not a vision even of a political solution. The unions of labourers, like the unions of the workmen, have talked, not of politics, but of political economy; have attacked no class and no government, have called for no laws, have denounced no property, and have asked for no help. The effort has been intense and bitter, but from first to last it has not roused a trace of political agitation, much less of incendiary socialism. The whole seafaring world, the mining world, and the railway world, and they are large worlds with us, have been stirred to passion by the tale of suffering and slaughter which the most guarded of official reports undoubtedly reveal. Yet all this indignation has taken no revolutionary form. The 'moaning of the wind' is but a blatant metaphor of the 'Revolutionary Epic.' They have neither cast their sufferings on property, nor do they look for salvation to the State. Stormy meetings of sailors ask only for a few new clauses in an Act; and a union of a hundred thousand miners have agitated for years for a few more stringent provisions as to truck, weighing, and inspection. In a few weeks there will meet in much-maligned Sheffield a parliament chosen by 700,000 skilled artisans, and, amidst many things which the rich dislike exceedingly, there will be heard what in that Parliament has been heard before, neither visions about reconstructing society, reforming property, or regenerating the State, but a solid attention to business, a discussion of Bills and Acts, and of bringing certain facts to the knowledge of Parliament. It may be well-done, or ill-done; but there will be nothing about 'social liquidation.'

It is said that Clive, in the midst of his defence against his accusers, broke off when he told the tale of his opportunities and his temptations. 'Good God! Mr. Chairman,' he cried, 'I wonder at my own moderation!' Some such wonder the vast mass of our people might well feel if, as with one mind and in one glance they could sum up the bitter suggestions of social pressure around them, the wild counsels not seldom flung among them, the furious utopias of some countries and some ages, and they could hear the calumnies with which they are assailed, whilst holding on with astonishing patience to the strictest path of legality. Let any one fairly ask what would be the nature of a vast agrarian agitation in some countries, what the language of a single union of colliers which united 120,000 men, say in Belgium or France; what would be the attitude abroad of a congress sent by 700,000 men, all enrolled and organised as exactly as a German army? And this vast association, which no Government in Europe but our own could look on without fear, is moving Parliament in the most constitutional way, towards what are, after all, mere questions of detail; is asking nothing of the State, but the modifications of three or four measures of mere police, which they say are made use of against them by their rivals in an economic struggle. That injustice is too often worked is admitted by parliaments and ministries. What besides these are the immediate wants of the working classes are questions of administrative detail, matters for parliamentary committees, with nothing in the shape of insurrection, or socialism,

or even democracy about them, measures for protecting life and health, for inspecting dangerous ships, fiery mines, adulterated food, measures which may be wise or may be unwise, but which are simple matters of working machinery. Not one word in all this to justify the inflated terrors of Conservative leaders, not a trace of menacing 'Society,' nor a tone that could alarm Property. If ever there was a moment in modern politics when official Liberalism had much to gain and nothing to lose by honestly throwing in its lot with the working millions, when their political aims were moderate and their political alliance safe, the present moment is of all that went before, and of all perhaps that will come after, the critical hour of choice.

Honestly to renew or retain that alliance requires no great thing. It means no doubt the clearing out the Home Office from that laborious lumber of 'favourable considerations' which now chokes up its doors; it means the giving up of that system of official trickery by which demands that cannot be gainsayed are slily muddled away; it means no more of the back-stairs bargains with sects and churches. But to ask for straightforward and efficient work is not asking so much. There is perhaps little need for any heroic measures. Those who would counsel Mr. Gladstone to reopen his House with startling novelties, who call out for some stroke of sensational legislation are not the wisest friends of Mr. Gladstone or the Liberal party. *Non tali auxilio.* Mr. Gladstone assumes the air of a man who thinks he has done his great work;

his immediate followers most certainly have that air, however little they assume it. The generation of which Mr. Bright is the incarnation feels, and feels with justice, that its great part is played. As one of the ablest and most zealous of them said to a younger man, 'You see the Radical programme with which we started in life is now all but realised.' The Radical programme of the older sort realised at last, and yet the millennium is not come! Well, we must accept these things. To force these complacent veterans into new campaigns would be to risk certain defeat. Heroic measures, even if they could plan them, would come from their lips with a hollow voice and a lack-lustre look.

There is a simpler way of quelling domestic discontent without dazzling attention by heroic campaigns. And that way is by honestly studying the causes of that discontent, patiently working out the people's claims, and dealing with them in a spirit of serious statesmanship, and not in the spirit of official shuffling. There is a great field before Liberal statesmen yet, without stirring the deeps of social agitation, or revising the constitution. The frank admission of the agricultural population to political rights, after the signal lessons of the labourers' movement, is an obvious necessity, as just as it is safe. The proofs of oppressive use of police law and justices' law, are too overwhelming and ubiquitous to be stored away even in the enormous receptacles of 'favourable considerations,' which must lie as vaults beneath the floors of the Home Office, and the Board of Trade.

Let us vary the Irish sessions, and the Educational sessions, and the Universal Muddle sessions, by a session of internal administration. Suppose a minister really tried to make any one department efficient in the sense in which a Prussian department is efficient; suppose a little of that genius which goes to make a party debate were thrown into the study of some of those details of domestic legislation, which make or ruin the happiness of the homes of the poor. It is a career, humble perhaps, but doubtless more substantial than any sham heroic legislation, for which the hour is not ripe, or the men are not come. The land question is a solid reality, which sneers and statistics are not likely to extinguish. But who shall say that it is ripe for legislation? Who can exactly say what it is? The working of our laws affecting the land is so technical and so intricate that the effect of any single change in the law is what no one can accurately trace, who is not a real-property lawyer with an eye for politics. The immediate effect of making an acre of land as marketable as a horse, would probably be to stimulate afresh the creation of great estates. The immediate effect of 'abolishing primogeniture' would probably be nothing but the saving some lawyers a good deal of trouble. The immediate effect of a crude interference with settlements would probably be to create a new order of conveyancers who would succeed in eluding it. Altogether, 'the land question' needs an amount of threshing out which has not yet begun, ere it can enter the field of practical politics. And perhaps not one man in a thousand who talks of

the land question knows what are the laws he wishes to modify. With Education the present dynasty will have enough to do, if it can get out of the mess which it has itself created. He must have strange ideas of statesmanship who still persists in seeing it in the grand measure, which is now covering the land with sectarian quarrels, and has stirred half the great towns to phrensies of polemical combat. They must have strange views about religion, who think it is served by turning half the clergy into agitators; or about education, who think it served by elevating it to the position of an Orange procession in Belfast. With all these matters on hand, the party in power have enough to do without being bated into heroic measures, or being allured into burning questions.

ESSAY V.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM.

[THE following Essay speaks for itself. It was published January 1, 1874. In the interval between this and the second Essay, a number of organic Measures had been passed—Irish Church Disestablishment, Irish Land Act, Education Act, Elections, Ballot, &c., &c., &c. The writer returns to the question of *internal* Parliamentary Reform; in which little, or nothing, had been done.]

THE opening of another year compels the busiest and the idlest alike to compare the present with the past and the future. We, who in England take stock of our political progress, can hardly shut out a mixed feeling of disappointment and of hope; in one sense a generation has changed so little, in another sense it has changed so much; we can show so long a roll of legislative reforms, and yet how little have they actually done! Corn-laws have been abolished, the whole system of tariffs has been abandoned, taxation has been recast, common law and chancery have been remodelled, we have swept out the iniquities of Doctors' Commons, and brought divorce home to the very door of the poor artisan. Every vestige of civil disability for religion has been removed, and Jews and Catholics are honoured judges and ministers. The

suffrage has been opened to every householder; bribery has been punished as the sin of witchcraft. Trades unions have been made legal, at least it is no longer lawful to rob them. The poor man has been relieved from the taxes on knowledge, and the rich man has been relieved from the tax on hair-powder. Everybody has been relieved; and surpluses have flown out of the Budget like bouquets from a conjuror's sleeve. The Irish Church has been firmly yet gently disestablished by the sense of public duty of a true son of the Church: the Irish peasant has had justice done him, and has even legal rights to his permanent improvements. The British voter, no longer cowed by the light of publicity, now goes proudly to his ballot-box. The judicature, the army, the public-houses, the Civil Service, have all been reorganised. And lastly, the Education Act has established at least the principle of compulsory national education. It is a great roll of legislative achievement; and yet—! Are these changes and reforms in result all that they claimed to be and seemed to be? Has the enthusiasm of people and ministers been justified in the event? Is Ireland a contented and united land? Are pocket-boroughs unknown here? Are bribery, intimidation, and dictation forgotten? Is the national administration yet a model; are all abuses in law at an end? Are the children of the poor in a fair way to a good education?

They who with no sneer of the partizan or the cynic can ask these questions of themselves, who see in these measures great acts of justice and great sources of prosperity, who are most desirous of seeing in them

all their good result, and of not asking from them more result than is just—even these men must feel sadly conscious how little Acts of Parliament correspond to changes in the life of the nation, at all in the degree of the hopes of those who frame them. To what extent has the condition of Ireland been seriously raised by statutes? How far do the evils which we remedy outstrip the new evils unconsciously growing up around us? Do the great measures which we herald as the gospel of peace, or which we resist as revolution, as 'destructive of the best interests of the nation,' as 'simooms' and 'hydras' and the like—do these measures, when they get on the statute-book and pass into the hands of magistrates and policemen, really work all the havoc or the blessing which we prophesied to our fellow-citizens? In soberness and in honesty it must be answered, No. We may still think the measures in question right, opportune, indispensable; or wrong, unnecessary, and self-interested. We may not see in what better way they could then have been passed, or we may think they need not have been passed. We may be proud of what was done, we may be proud of the men who did it, or we may deplore their action. And yet we must feel that its being done mattered really less than we were ever willing to suppose.

All this should have a sobering effect upon public men. It should bring home to them that they are not omnipotent, that legislation is but one of the forms, and not one of the sources, of civilisation, that Acts of Parliament are not reformations. Our public men,

inspired with the consciousness of creative energy, which is the vanity of Parliaments, too seldom remember the littleness of each legislative act, and the narrow circumscription of their power over the character of their age. Mr. Lowe, when he recalls the godlike purposes of his party, and their beneficent administration, is lost in wonder at the ingratitude of the recipients of such blessings, at the general hesitation to welcome the millennium. So good, so great a ministry, so little understood! No Liberal denies that they have served their country, and have carried useful measures. But thus to be lost in amazement at their own exceeding wisdom and goodness argues too high sense of the power of any statesmen and of any measures. Political parties, when they have done all that is commanded of them, must still say they are unprofitable servants of the country; nor should they expect the public to fall down to them, as to Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. As statesmen they may have done great things; but the limits of statesmanship are very rigid. Each Act of Parliament but adds a brick to the edifice of our lives. Sensational legislation is not only impolitic, but it is sterile. For a single statute can do little more than expound a principle. The philosophers are for ever warning the statesmen, that statesmen are not the great people that they think; that Parliament is often but a Court of Registry, and often but a national platform. The statute-book is but an element in our national civilisation, and they who make that statute-book must remember that its achievements for ever fall short of its promises. Like

wise men they must be content with what they can do, without expecting extravagant results, or assuming impossible powers. They must recognise the infinitely subtle and complex character of society as an organism, rejecting the heroic remedies, and the hope of social reconstruction; giving up all 'simoom' theories of human affairs, and all omnipotent theories of parliamentary legislation. With a year which opens with the grey dull tones of 1874, to a man who can recall the world of a generation since, there must be borne in the sobering lesson that legislation effects much less than men suppose, that it effects that little more slowly than men suppose, and that in order to effect even that it must work through a multitude of channels, and foresee a multitude of consequences.

On the other hand, the retrospect has its own cheerful side. There is no doubt that, on the whole, the general political condition has sensibly improved, in things material very greatly improved, and that in a large measure by means of legislative help. We can distinctly trace the good results of many an Act of Parliament; but still more often we find a solid change distinctly apart from legislative help. Statutes are like the corn-seed, much of which is dried up and withered, much of which is choked by tares, but much of which bears fruit after a period of apparent unfruitfulness. Then, again, we must feel that things which were common formerly are impossible now; evils which repeated statutes failed to touch have disappeared like clouds; that there is a growing unity between legislation and the spirit of its age. Hence we may well rest assured

that the Liberal legislation of a generation has on the whole been based on the right lines; and that if it is not altogether omniscient beneficence, it is something more than blundering and plundering.

This moderate estimate of the results of legislation may also suggest the necessity of doing something to improve the legislative machinery. Legislation, at its best, can never do all it promises to do, and short of its best it does hardly anything at all. Every year of advanced civilisation requires more scientific skill in legislation, and makes the necessary machinery far more complicated. If there be anything on which parties are fairly agreed, which politicians on both sides deplore equally, it is the outrageous waste of power in the parliamentary engine, the expenditure of fuel, the amount of friction, the frequency of break-down. In other words, the mechanism of our parliamentary system cries aloud for amendment. A Parliament which we are told has scattered reforms broadcast like a good genius, can hardly employ its declining days better than by doing something towards reforming itself. All this is no radical grievance or platform abuse to furnish forth an annual motion. It is a thing admitted on all sides; and of all men, leaders of parties and ministers are perhaps those who feel most deeply the extent of the evil. No one could tell the dismal tale of delays, waste, and confusion, both in making and in working Acts of Parliament, as they can who are responsible for them. The way in which an ordinary statute is put together would be a scandal to a solicitor or a conveyancer drafting a common settle-

ment or will. It is not but that the Bills are skilfully prepared when they enter the House; it is that the majority of Acts get finally settled in a sort of scuffle, in which clauses are tossed out or jerked in at random, and a legal web of a hundred sections is pieced together, and re-pieced by a wrangling committee of four hundred or five hundred members. Thus the last state of that Bill is invariably worse than the first. When it has been 'amended in Committee' it is usually a thing of rags and patches; it comes into the House in the state in which it ought to go out, and it usually goes out in a state which is really little better than notes for a draftsman. Of course, in important Government matters, great efforts are made to keep the clauses straight whilst going through Committees; but this can only be done much as a ship might have her rigging or engines refitted in the midst of a general action. It is very rarely indeed that the lawyer or the official lights on an Act which from beginning to end is free from blunder or inconsistency, in the sense in which every well-drawn deed is free from both. An ordinary statute differs from an ordinary deed, much as a marriage settlement, prepared by a competent lawyer, differs from one which should be finally settled in a dozen fierce wrangles between the heated relatives of the happy pair. If testators, when executing their wills, were to put in new clauses on the spur of the moment, or the 'respective families' were to cut about the drafts of an eminent conveyancer, wills and settlements would bear a strong resemblance to modern Acts of Parliament. And the incoherence and error

with which they are marked is for the most part avoidable. As a rule, it is all imported into the Bill after the second reading. Till then the Bill was probably as accurate and precise as any other well-drawn legal document. Now at the present time the minutest word misplaced in an Act may cause indefinite hardship, labour, or confusion. That words of such almost mystical value should be tossed about in the *mêlée* of factious divisions is a crying scandal on our national good sense.

Nor is the drafting of Acts of Parliament the only source of disorder and waste. The abuses in the business of the House, the multiplication of contrivances for delay, the torrent of purely administrative detail, and of official routine, which pours into the public sittings, the intricacy of the course of procedure, the recurrence of constant miscarriage, and the wild muddle of political with purely executive work—is it not written in the book of Hansard, and graven on the brain of every capable man who ever sat in the House? Statesmen, journalists, essayists are perpetually crying out against the incalculable evils of an institution with such vast potential powers abandoned to such disorganisation. When we look at facts and not at names we find the executive and legislative powers of the most complex empire and the most intricate society of modern times all heaped in promiscuous confusion upon an assembly, the forms and traditions of which belong to a very different function. At any moment from noon until midnight a gas bill may explode into an attack upon a ministry, and five hundred breathless

party-men will be dragged into opposite lobbies about a sewer or an office-boy. Masses of common routine orders, which in other countries are settled by a minister's deputy, and settled well, in this country are the subject of interminable discussion in a huge club of meddlesome amateurs. The right organisation of the executive, as distinct from the legislative functions; of the work of ministers, as distinct from that of senators, is one of the most pressing of our wants. In a time when a highly organised administration and a really scientific legislation are needed for national existence, we have six hundred members of Parliament, each of whom is more or less of a minister, and ministers each of whom is only a hard-worked member of Parliament. The British Empire is tending to be governed by something that is only a prolonged public meeting, and a public meeting which claims the attributes of Justinian and the Shah of Persia.

Parliamentary Reform, in the sense of reorganising the course of business in the Houses, would be a worthy subject for the consideration of a Parliament rather in want of congenial occupation. And certainly no statesman of our time so fit as Mr. Gladstone to undertake the task. His immense experience of parliamentary and official business, his mastery over details, and his dexterity in adapting old contrivances to new uses, combined with his pre-eminent influence over this House of Commons, mark him out as the one man who might fairly grapple with the task. It is not a work to be accomplished off-hand. But Mr. Gladstone has already shown by his words, as well as by his acts,

that he is deeply impressed with the defects of our parliamentary machine, and that much must be done to improve it, if capable government is to be carried on by its agency. At a time when great party questions are out of the way, and nothing absorbing is agitating the public mind, it would be a misfortune if the opportunity be not seized to disentangle the Executive from the Legislative action of Parliament, to reorganise the Executive as a distinct function, to give system to the chaos of parliamentary business, and at least to consolidate and reform the text of statute law.

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It is often asked, What is there for Parliament now to do? What is there to do? There is any amount of work without touching a single party question, or waiting for any popular movement. There is the codification of the law, and the consolidation of the statutes, the reorganisation of local taxation, the revision of the system of local justice, the reducing to order the entire framework of internal administration. No one supposes that the whole paraphernalia of the justice-room and petty sessions, so picturesquely associated with the highest poetry and fiction of the language, is worthy of an age with the resources of ours. It is not bound up with any cause dear to party, and yet if a beneficent legislation were to choose the one question where a thoroughly scientific reform would bring the greatest happiness and relief home to the doors of the rural population, it would probably be by dealing with the unpaid magistracy.

The question of reorganising the machinery of legislation and of disentangling executive from legislative functions, is closely connected with a subject which as yet is but matter for superb leaders and complacent good sense. The complicated machinery of Parliament, and its miscellaneous executive functions, can only be worked on the assumption that Parliament really consists of a governing class. How is the machinery to be worked in the midst of something approaching civil war? How are the government of Ireland and Parliamentary chaos to be permanently made compatible? Home Rule in Ireland is as yet, to the English public, something not very intelligible and slightly tedious. What can they want? says the average householder; and why not pass laws in Westminster as well as in Dublin? It is a matter of which but a few years will suffice to develop the meaning. The next election to all appearance will force the householder to understand Home Rule, by showing him an immense preponderance of Irish votes forming a definitely Irish party.[1] When this party for the first time is recruited from Protestant and Catholic, and comprises within it Cromwellians, Ultramontanes, and Republicans, it will knock at the door of English politics with a force which will have to be listened to, for it threatens unless dealt with to bring English parties to a deadlock. The legislation, and still more the attitude of the last few years, have virtually broken the back of Protestant ascendancy. Now, for centuries the instrument by which Ireland has been governed

[1] This came about rather unexpectedly within a month, in February 1874.

has been, in some form or other, this Protestant ascendancy. The Parliament of 1868, in flinging behind it this ill-omened weapon, prepared, whether knowingly or not, a new era for Ireland. The English nation is now, for the first time for generations, in the presence of Irish nationality; and if it be found that it has discarded the old secret of empire, without having fully elaborated a new one, the relations of the two nations will have to be recast afresh.

If we need an example of the type to which Legislation should not conform, we have it in the famous Education Act. Here Parliament, instead of taking up a great question itself, and settling it in a spirit of vigorous precision, has made itself a simple arena for religious and local bodies contending for purely sectarian ends. The utterances of politicians appear now to admit that the Education Act is not the settlement, as was supposed, but the opening of the question. Looked at from an historical point of view, it will probably appear hereafter that the Act of 1870 formulated the principle of national education, but did not even plan the foundations. The spectacle of school-board elections which we have just been witnessing, and are yet about to witness, offers every element which tests that a question is not settled and has not been solved. That a great national duty should be understood in fifty different ways in every part of the country, that it should be decided by irrelevant issues, and become the excuse for outbursts of rival fanaticisms is just the character which stamps a measure

in the eyes of English politicians as essentially unstatesmanlike. Parliament has many defects, and our system of legislation is unscientific. But when Parliament deals with a question of national importance it does the work itself, and it does not hand it over to parishes and vestries. Matters of local health and relief, it is our custom to leave in the hands of local authority. But education was taken up as a great national concern which Parliament alone could provide for. The idea of throwing the religious difficulty to each parish as a bone of local contention was perhaps ingenious, but all sides are getting rather ashamed of it. It has conspicuously failed; the furious polemics of the rival sects scandalise those who thought that a national duty had been finally accomplished; the invasion of politics by sectarian agitators, and the reckless pertinacity of cliques, has disgusted quiet men of business. It is in vain to repeat the specious commonplace that the Act is not responsible for bigotry and sectarianism, that it aimed only at utilising the existing machinery of voluntary bodies. This specious commonplace, like so many others, is not true. The result has proved, on the contrary, that a new stimulus has been given to religious rivalries, that political ascendancy has been offered as the prize of the victor, that education has been approached from its religious, not from its secular side, from its parochial not its national side. Great questions cannot be shirked by a court of supreme legislation, and statesmen are not people who dabble in clerical manœuvres. It is, however, much that the principle of national education has been

asserted, and the great need now is to bring back the question to the one point of efficient public instruction. It is much that education should have been raised to its present pre-eminence as a national concern; but he must be of a sanguine temper who assumes that the problem is really settled. Two things, however, in the meantime, have been accomplished. A great body of sectarian agitation has been called into political activity, four-fifths of which will be permanently used on the retrograde side in secular politics. And the position of the Established Church has been advanced to the line of practical questions.

ESSAY VI.

THE CONSERVATIVE REACTION.

[This Essay was published March 1, 1874, immediately after the General Election, precipitated by Mr. Gladstone. If the result was overwhelming beyond all immediate expectation, it was not in disagreement with the principles maintained in the earlier Essays of this volume (1867, and 1868).]

It is ever easy to be wise after the event, and nothing now can seem more obvious than the causes of the great revolution in parties. Like other and greater revolutions it is all clear the moment it has happened. The famous Dissolution mine has exploded the wrong way, and annihilated the defenders, and not the besiegers, of the ministerial citadel. Now everyone can tell us why it failed, though no one foretold, and very few at all expected it. The truth is, that the famous manifesto of Mr. Gladstone, his programme of future legislation, the budget, the surplus, the income-tax, indeed, political questions of any special kind, have had no influence at the polls. We all, politicians, statesmen, essayists, speakers and writers alike, habitually exaggerate the amount and area of political conviction. Except under exceptional excitement, those who seriously care for political questions, even those who vote

under definite political impulse, are quite a minority, often a small minority. Half-conscious bias, personal liking, vague habit and vaguer hopes, determine the votes of the non-political bulk of the electors. Mr. Gladstone committed the mistake of supposing that this indifferent mass would form definite views upon specific public questions; and writers and speakers, party-men, journalists, and all on both sides followed his mistake. The story of the last month should be a lesson to them all. Public men talk and think of the country being 'agitated' about some one's new Bill, just as a theatrical clique talks of 'the town,' being delighted by the new farce, just as some group of gossips imagines mankind divided by the quarrel of two dowagers. The real country, the millions who are attending to their occupations, or who vote at the polls, all the while never heard of the new Bill, the blazing principle, or even its author, just as they never knew that there ever had been a new farce at all, or a drawing-room scandal of any kind. So Mr. Gladstone's great appeal fell utterly flat, for it never reached more than the political class, who are always a small percentage of those who vote. The elections have been determined by causes which have existed for long months and years, which are very much older than any cabinet revelation, and very much deeper than any budget or any programme. As compared with six years ago, there is a very real change in the country as a whole. The change is not perhaps very deep in political convictions; but it is a very real change in political temper; and a tremendous change in party government. The change is not only very

even in its effect, but it is one very extensive in its area. It must have momentous results on the course of political progress. Let us try to satisfy ourselves what is its true nature.

A change so wide-spread and emphatic is not to be accounted for by any small or accidental cause. We are all too ready to explain political crises by means of some single or some direct agency. Political crises hardly ever arise except under a multitude of minor and indirect agencies which have long contended or combined with each other, and at last find expression in a common cause. But as the present, like other catastrophes of party, has had its minor accidents, they may fairly claim our first attention, and be quickly dismissed from the political horizon.

The outraged dignity of Beer has indeed been nobly avenged. Brewers, distillers, and beersellers have been everywhere the popular heroes; and falling in with a stagnant era of political energy, and many another irritated interest, the great Trade has won a signal triumph. Of all the minor causes of the Conservative reaction, the most distinct, as also the most universal, has unquestionably been Beer. Masses of electors, in ordinary times, vote as schoolboys will shout—by the mere contagion of noise and fun; and the rattle of the taproom or a glass of beer will decide the political convictions of hundreds who waver betwixt Progress and Antiquity.

There were other causes; but they were but the minor causes of the great change. A change of one hundred and forty votes in five years must be occasioned by something

yet deeper and more general than this. If party men are to be found who set it all down to the beer trade, or to the 25th Section, or to Mr. Bruce, to the match-tax, or the *Alabama* arbitration, or the Carlton Club, or all combined, they are only trifling with the matter. The truth must be faced that in five years the country, England at least, had distinctly changed its mind. There is a real Conservative reaction of a certain kind, more or less common to all parts of this island, and more or less marked in all sections of the public. That this reaction is somewhat vague in its aims, that it is largely made up of lassitude, and very unlikely to be active, that it is accidentally swollen by special offences, and made articulate by a series of blunders, that its main substratum is a national plethora of prosperity, and the coating of odium which gradually incrusts a Ministry, ought not to close our eyes to the fact that the reaction really exists. And the first thing to be done is to perceive that the country is in a very different mood from what it was five or six years ago.

A very marked feature in the struggle has been the hostility displayed towards ministers as such. Closely allied to this impression is a feeling which affects the Liberal party even more than a Liberal Government, the distaste of the mass of the nation for the mechanical repetition of economic sophisms. The saws which the money-making classes pretend to be political economy, the gospel of *laissez-faire*, or rights of (wealthy) man, may be sovereign maxims for getting on in the world, but they must ruin a political party. The so-called Liberal party is that which specially prides itself on the

purity of its economic orthodoxy, is the party which is always on the side of doing nothing, that is, practically on the side of the rich, which is ever ready with scientific dogmas to show the criminal weakness of protecting the weak, which teaches there is but one way of making ships seaworthy, or mines safe, or factories healthy, fraudulent traders honest, and overworked children happy, and that is by letting them all alone, by respecting the god-like wisdom of enlightened self-interest. It is true no Government of a civilised community can ever act upon this cynical paradox; but a Liberal Government seems that which is most ready to listen to its appeal, and is most associated with its professors. The hard-and-fast party man of the straightest sect of Liberalism or Radicalism who could say his economic catechism without stumbling, and is without a taint of economic heresy, has been wont to smile at the vision of the Conservative working-man. Perhaps he smiles no longer. He has had a good deal to do with the making of the Conservative working-man, who in all the measures which directly affect himself has found the Radical economist his stiffest opponent. Throughout the manufacturing districts it seems clear that the Conservative candidates, rather more often and distinctly than the Liberal candidates, have supported the measures desired by the workmen. In Lancashire and Yorkshire the old tradition was that the Conservative, and not the Liberal, was the workman's friend, and the Nine Hours' Bill and the Masters' Federation have done much to revive the tradition. In any case, it seems clear that Conservative employers are at least as

popular with their workmen as the Liberal employers in many, if not in all, parts of the country. One sees no particular reason for the contrary. And the dream of the party Liberal that all workmen, the moment they had the franchise, would hasten to give it to the great Free Trade party, is a dream which has now no foundation, if it ever had any in the past.

Fortunately the skilled workman is usually a politician as well as a member of a class. In the long-run, and in most trades, he is on broad grounds on the side of Progress. And the great bulk of the skilled artisans will undoubtedly be found to have voted for the Liberal cause, though in the cotton and textile trades, where political intelligence is not very broad, where trade questions are very absorbing, and where the factory system stimulates a local and domestic partisanship, the Conservative working-men may be found in masses. In some of the factory districts they vote by mills and wards in the spirit in which schoolboys play cricket or football by 'houses,' or 'forms.' Those who imagined that the entire workman vote was going to be cast for the historic Liberal party completely forgot that amongst large masses of workmen, especially mill-hands, a popular neighbour commands all the influence which the captain of the boats or an athletic tutor has in colleges and schools. They also forgot that the number of the skilled artisans which the Act of 1867 added to the register was not overwhelming, and only in a few places made them equal to the upper and middle classes combined. They also forgot that the skilled artisans are a very different body from the town

labourers. large numbers of whom were placed on the register for the first time in 1867. Perhaps throughout all English society there is no break more marked than that which in cities divides the skilled from the unskilled workmen. In temper, interest, and intelligence, they are separated by a deep and invariable gulf. The political aptitudes and proclivities, with which in 1867 it was the fashion to credit the workmen, were truly credited to the skilled workmen, but not accurately, or but partially, to the unskilled. The Whigs forgot if Mr. Disraeli remembered that when you pass below the skilled workmen you come upon a stratum of casual employment, low education, and habitual dependence, where political action is dormant, and the influences of clergyman, publican, wealth, and mere ostentation, are almost paramount. Without using the offensive term 'residuum,' it is obvious that below the body of skilled artisans there exists a large and floating body of town labourers, whom in times of prosperity and political stagnation a little demagogism can easily win for the Conservative side. This is a body which the genius of Mr. Disraeli secured for the British constitution.

But if large sections of the unskilled workmen, and some sections of the skilled workmen have been brought to swell the Conservative following, who were the agents by whom they were influenced? Almost exclusively middle-class capitalists and popular employers. And that brings us to what is, perhaps, the backbone of the Conservative reaction, the change of front of the great composite middle-class. The real truth is that the middle-class, or its effective strength, has swung

round to Conservatism. Conservatism no doubt it is of a vague and negative kind; but its practical effect is an undefined preference for 'leaving well alone.' When we look at the poll in the City of London, in Westminster, in Middlesex, in Surrey, in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, in the metropolitan boroughs and in the home counties, in all the centres of middle-class industry, wealth and cultivation, we see one unmistakeable fact, that the rich trading-class, and the comfortable middle-class have grown distinctly Conservative. There are no special causes at work in these great constituencies. Beer has no influence with the merchants, shopkeepers, and citizens of London. There are no dockyards in Surrey and Middlesex. There are no great landlords or employers in Marylebone. The Carlton Club cannot pull the wires of Manchester and Sheffield. The 25th Section men are not very strong in Westminster, and there is no 'residuum' in Hertfordshire and Essex, in Lancashire and Yorkshire counties. These great boroughs and counties contain the very flower of the men of business, whose indomitable energy builds up these five millions of surplus, who pay so large a proportion of that income-tax which was offered them as a bonus. The inference is unmistakeable. The effective force of the middle-class has grown for a season Conservative. The Conservative party has become as much the middle-class party as the Liberal used to be, as much and more. The great merchants of London, the great spinners of Manchester, are Tories of the Tories; and the small merchant and tradesman has begun to follow the fashion. The

brewer, the distiller, the soap-boiler, the cotton-broker, and the drysalter, have strong constitutional opinions. The sleek citizens, who pour forth daily from thousands and thousands of smart villas round London, Manchester and Liverpool, read their *Standard* and believe that the country will do very well as it is. There is nothing now exclusive about the Conservative party. It is, in the old sense of the words, just as popular and democratic as the Liberal party. If one casts the eye down the list of the 351 Conservatives, we find middle-class traders preponderating in the boroughs, and fairly conspicuous in the sacred preserves of the counties. Conservatism has opened its arms to the middle-classes, and has reaped its just reward.

What are the causes of this great parliamentary change would be a long and intricate tale to tell. Perhaps the principal has been the advance of the working-classes along the whole of their line. Enormous development in prosperity has led to an extraordinary demand for labour. Labour, in spite of the economists, does not in practice 'flow,' and does not always come when you turn on the tap, no, not if you use a golden key. The natural result was competition for the workmen, rapidly increasing wages, augmented independence and power to the labourers. It was borne in upon the middle-class, especially on the lower middle-class, and those whose incomes are fixed or narrow, that the working-classes were invading them. The middle-classes felt their heel trodden on by the workman. It flashed on them with a sense of horror that they themselves were sinking under the struggle, that large

sections of them were without *raison d'être* and destined to early absorption. Middle-class tradesmen who had been paying 40*s.* a ton for coals whilst they paid 40*s.* a week for wages, were hardly likely as a body to vote for the Liberal party.

With the wealthier sections of the middle-class, the men whose success, energy and shrewdness impress and guide their neighbours; with the professional and cultivated groups in the great cities; with the clubs, the chambers of commerce, the exchanges; with 'society,' other and more truly political feelings doubtless prevailed. They had coolly reflected over the great political changes of the last six years, accomplished and projected, and they thought, on the whole, that they had had enough. The state of the Continent has strengthened reaction throughout Europe, and has discredited democracy. The German military empire has flung some halo over feudal institutions. The revolutionary storms of France and of Spain have cast a shadow upon popular causes. Even the story of the Commune of Paris, the true lesson of which is so little understood, has affected Liberalism in England, with which it has as little real connection as the famine in Bengal. Nay, our political classes are far from being strictly logical, and it was as good logic as most to reason that the Communists were miscreants, that the Commune arose with French working-men, that the Liberal party claim the support of English working-men, and that therefore to support the Liberal party was to encourage miscreants and possibly inaugurate the Commune in London.

We must all acquiesce in this, for it is the plain

decision of the nation. Premature attempts to reorganise the Liberal party on any clap-trap cry will recoil heavily on those who attempt it. Futile explanations of the late defeat by any temporary cause will only make that defeat more enduring. The first thing to be done is to recognise the facts; and the first fact is that the Liberal party at present consists of two heterogeneous sections, and that both combined are not a majority. Whether these sections will ever be got into line together again is exceedingly doubtful; but this will not be obtained by denying the separation. A considerable portion of the upper and middle-class seceders will no doubt be permanently added to the regular party of resistance. There are great questions which remain to be dealt with, and pressing wants which ought to be supplied. With some of them perhaps a Conservative Government can deal as well as a Liberal Government. And some of them, it must be admitted, are not in a state of due preparation. The peculiar institution of England, the feudalisation of the land, will some day meet with its legislative remedy, or rather lose its legislative sanction; but this great problem with its legal, practical, and political difficulties, has hardly yet begun to be treated with adequate knowledge and a determined end. The minor struggle around the Education Act must broaden, as the Conservatives see, into a struggle round the very principle of privileged Church and State connection with religion. And it must be allowed that opinion is far from mature on the question, whilst the country for the time has relegated it from the sphere of politics to the sphere of

thought. To found a high system of national education, to secure religious independence and equality, to bind the labourer, the farmer, and the proprietor by healthier ties to the land which they cultivate, are problems which await the generations to come; but for the time the nation has decided that they must take the form of appeals to public opinion, and not of direct experiment in legislating.

The wildest Tory can hardly suppose that the wish of the country for a period of rest is equivalent to a spirit of active retrogression. There is nothing very terrible about the Conservative reaction, and no reason to fear that it will undo any great work that has been done, or put an end to the course of administrative improvements. There is nothing feudal about the Toryism of 1874, nothing retrograde about its principles. It is just as much bourgeois, industrial, and practical as Liberalism itself, and as to its principles it has no principles at all. A party which implicitly obeys a new man of genius and is largely made up of great employers and capitalists, is not about to fly at the nineteenth century, and is just as likely to find good men of business as any of its rivals.

There is one great feature of policy in which a Conservative Government may easily surpass its predecessor, as it can hardly contrive to sink below it. The weak side of the Gladstone Government has been its foreign policy, or rather absence of a foreign policy. The Russo-Turkish question, the Khivan question, the *Alabama* question, the whole attitude of England in 1870 and 1871, have left on the nation a sense of being

exceedingly insignificant in the estimation of the world. Not only is the effacement of England as a European power an acknowledged fact, but the late Government had an air of bragging about it as a stroke of genius, and a triumph of true economy. Like the fox in the fable, it was continually lecturing its neighbours on the practical advantages of getting rid of your tail and avoiding the incumbrance of a national position. Englishmen do not, perhaps, regard the opinion of other nations with the jealous vanity of Frenchmen; but it is a very great mistake to suppose that they are not acutely alive to public contempt. For generations our Governments have risen and fallen on foreign questions. It will be found that the paramount prestige of Mr. Gladstone and his Ministry first began to wane when the nullity of England was manifested during the war of 1870. The attitude of the Government may have shown a masterly inactivity; and the war song of 'happy, happy England' may have been chanted with striking success; but when it was all over, Englishmen did not look back on their part with pride. The brilliant discovery that there was a 'cheap defence of nations,' not exactly in national honour, but in diplomatic compliments, was tried again and again; and the Russian Empire was invited to help itself with the same ceremonious helplessness as the Prussian Empire had been. Mr. Disraeli's Government has an opportunity now of removing the tone of sonorous imbecility which has grown to be the habitual key of English diplomacy. Whatever its foreign policy may be, it can hardly be so bad as the policy of boasting that nothing can induce you to have a policy at all. Even if home affairs are

to bide their time for a space, it is some compensation to feel that we are free from a system of which the ideal was to raise England to the national position of Australia or Holland.

The Conservative reaction then is no illusion, but a very solid reality, for the tone of the nation has become distinctly Conservative. On mere party questions the effect must be tremendous and probably prolonged. It is far from likely that the lowest point in the fortunes of the Liberal party has been reached. Another, and yet another fall, for aught we can see, may await it. And a new generation may have sprung up before another great era of change has set in. But there is little ground for thinking that a catastrophe so ruinous to whips and wire-pullers, is any great catastrophe to the country. There is less ground for thinking that a Conservative Government will differ very much in practice from a Liberal Government, or that the nation has the slightest intention of submitting to any substantive change of principle. If the new Government will efficiently carry on the general spirit by which home affairs have been guided since the repeal of the corn laws, and will add to that a consistent and national foreign policy, there is surely no reason why it should not be long in the ascendant. If Toryism were so infatuated as to take popular irritation against ambitious blundering for a popular desire to return to the past, it will be speedily and rudely thrust aside. The Conservative reaction is a great fact, in so far as it seats Mr. Disraeli and his friends in firm and undisputed possession of power; but it has very little that is truly Conservative, and next to nothing of real reaction.

ESSAY VII.

FOREIGN POLICY.

[It is no part of this volume to deal with Foreign Policy in general, and the following Essay makes no profession to do so. It is inserted as bearing strictly on the question of this book—the weak side inevitably presented by our present Parliamentary system. The enormous difference between the attitude of England towards the world two or three generations ago, as compared with its attitude in this and the more recent Parliaments, is a matter for curious study. Of late years there has been a species of paralysis about our foreign policy which cannot be caused either by want of energy or skill in our diplomacy. It can be directly traced to the growth of Parliamentary Executive, whereby a floating majority of popular representatives practically neutralises all initiative and energy in our Foreign Policy, without itself contributing any new force. Our Foreign Policy is Effacement, simply because there is no organic Executive in our system. The object of this Essay (published in May 1874) is to urge that this is more than an evil: that it is a *danger*, of the first magnitude. I advocate no special Foreign Policy; I do not call for 'a spirited Foreign Policy' as it is said (though the Abyssinian and the Ashantee wars were 'spirited' enough). I call only for a *national* and settled policy in Europe as essential to the very safety of this country.]

THE aim of a Conservative Government, we are told, is to give to the country a period of rest; and it certainly bids fair to fulfil its mission. Public Affairs, at any

rate in England, like the historic snakes in Ireland, form a chapter that is easily written; that is to say, there are none. But this vacancy in the annals of our country, as it is the best proof, they say, of the happiness of the people, so it may be used to very good purpose and with much profit by the inquiring mind. The profound calm of the country within invites us to study the state of the country without. Foreign affairs, it has well been said, are not so much the affairs of foreigners as the affairs of England in relation to foreigners. And a Conservative reaction may prove a solid gain to this nation if it turns men's minds to serious thought upon the position of the Empire with regard to its many neighbours.

Do we sufficiently recognise the fact that in twenty years Russia has recovered all, and more than all, she lost by the Crimean War? Do we feel that she is relatively far stronger and nearer to us now than she was in the halcyon days which preceded that great struggle? What a lavish outlay of blood and treasure and some show of statesmanship then assured to this country, has been flung away by a policy of huckstering self-abasement. What has become of that understanding with France, deeper than ministries or dynasties in either country, which made the two people feel that they had at bottom common interests in Europe? What has become of that European equilibrium of which we felt ourselves in some sort the guardians, and of which we so largely enjoyed the advantage? The entire state of things, the very order of ideas, are gone; and nothing definite but great armies and em-

pires has taken the place. Happy, happy England stands alone. If the Russians descend on Constantinople, and we choose to defend it, we must do so absolutely alone—that is to say, we shall not do it at all. There will not be a hundred thousand French soldiers to take the Malakoff for us. We must do it ourselves. And as one English army corps even since Lord Cardwell's time is perhaps hardly yet a match for about thirty Russian corps, it is unlikely that the Malakoff will be taken again. It has long been a fixed basis in our policy that Austria had far more interest in keeping Russia from the Bosphorus than we have ourselves, and that she was in ample position to do so. She was, but she is no longer. A hint from Berlin would suffice; the most simple understanding between the Russian and the German cabinets would paralyse Austria, and leave the conquest of Turkey a mere military promenade. In other words, a Russian Government has only to give its orders, make its terms with Prince Bismarck, engage our Foreign Office in a sham correspondence, and the Levant in a month is a Muscovite lake.

Against this possibility the trust of the British public is simply that the Czar will do nothing so wicked. So thought the Peace Society when, in 1853, it flew with healing on its wings to St. Petersburg. But to sensible men no such trust is vouchsafed. They recognise the enormous development of Russia since the Peace of Paris; the change which her military resources have received by the system of railways, manufactories, and docks; and, lastly, the fabulous

sum-total of her armies. The Russian Empire is now three times as powerful for war as she was a generation ago. And to suppose that this tremendous apparatus of conquest is built up for nothing, and is destined for display, is quite unreasonable. It is directed by intellects as sleepless and wills as concentrated as ever shaped the destinies of a nation. The Czar himself is doubtless peaceful, and somewhat too indolent for a great design; but around him there are brains of an aspiring order, and behind them all the Russian race. The Czar with all his power is still but an instrument; and it may well suit the schemers in the background to place him in the front; to celebrate the English alliance and hospitalities with pipe and drum, trumpets and lords in waiting. But Czar, weddings, and hospitalities, mean as little as the froth in a loving-cup. Whilst our Court is making holiday like a careful family which has gotten a fine match for a younger son, the close brains who work the Russian Empire are busier than ever. A month or two, a year or two matter little to a race with a destiny and a faith steadily before them; for the classes which mould the course of Russia have small taste for the tradesman's honest industry, for peaceful devotion to the science of making money. They have a faith in their country's mission and a conception of its conquering destiny quite alien to the insipid religion of comfort which unmans the governing classes of the West. They have a purpose and a dream which we can only conceive by the aid of history, and which has really something of the grand within it. The indefinite extension and

aggrandisement of the Russian Empire has behind it a national force which is perhaps the most permanent of its kind in Europe. The passing of this moral force into a reality and a fact, is but a matter of external and material conditions. And the conditions are manifestly approaching a state of complete preparation for a crisis. The decision has but to be made, the German price has but to be paid, our governments have but to be amused with diplomatic feints, and the eagles will wave over the Eastern Mediterranean.

So far, in their inmost reflections, most Englishmen are prepared to go; and it seems an easy solution to resolve that, at the first signal of movement from Sebastopol or Odessa, an English army and fleet will descend on Egypt, and secure all that England cares for in the Levant—the passage to India. This is very easy to say, but it is far from clear that an English Ministry has life enough left for such a stroke, which would have to be struck before one could even find out what the *Times* would say of it; and, what is far more important, it is much less clear that the most resolute Ministry could do it without the support or the assent of other Powers in Europe. Whose interest or wish could it be to send England to the Nile? And is she likely to go there against the will of the rest of the European world? But to let that pass, to suppose that such a step were in the first place possible, and in the next place would attain its object, there is a great deal yet to be considered. Russia is an Asiatic Power just as completely as England, and, morally speaking, far more so. The dream of universal dominion is far

stronger on her Asiatic than on her European side. The story of the Khivan expedition should teach us how that dream tends to shape itself into fact, almost in spite of the intention of the principal actors; and the pages of the Khivan Blue-book have made us all feel how impotent to arrest it is diplomatic eloquence. Lord Partington defying the Russian tide with his accomplished goose-quill is not a picture which rouses our national pride.

Our position in the East, with regard to Russia, is one very far from satisfactory. Each year brings us closer together, and the so-called neutral-ground, of which so much has been made, leaves things worse than before. Our Indian Empire is no doubt possessed of immense resources for defence, and Russia perhaps does more justice to the fighting power of our army of occupation than we do ourselves; but it is far from clear that these resources would prove adequate if left, even for a moderate period, without support from the mother-island. Now if Russia ever really contemplates an aggressive movement, it will probably be along the whole line at once. Her armies are so enormous, her extent and resources are such, that if the word were given to brave a conflict with England she could occupy us simultaneously with her fleet in many parts of the world—could descend upon Constantinople and threaten the Levant, and at the same time occupy Afghanistan and Persia, and plant herself at the gates, or within the gates, of Hindostan. It is tolerably certain that if this momentous effort be ever made, it will not be made unsupported. It will have

to obtain the sanction, if not the help, of the German arbiter of Europe. It would be rendered easy by the moral support of the United States. The German and the American Governments have only to establish a malevolent neutrality, to assume an attitude of hostility, to let a few *Alabamas* slip from their ports, discover 'questions' in Belgium, Heligoland, Canada, or Jamaica, or even, let us say, in Gibraltar, Malta, and Suez, and it is difficult to say what might not happen. It is easy to say what would happen. England would be like a whale attacked at once by a shoal of swordfish. Her empire, scattered broadcast over two hemispheres, exposes her to assault from fifty sides at once. Her formidable fleet cannot be everywhere at once; whilst it would signify very little where her puny army was or was not. The fighting resources of the British army in India might perhaps guarantee, for the time, the defence of that empire; and the fleet might possibly protect any single spot, the retention of which was thought to be essential; but where would be the Empire on which the sun never sets at the end of the conflict, if Russia once chose to set herself to dismember it, and Germany and America abetted or assented to the scheme? To whom should England turn? To Austria, jammed between two giants? To France, panting, despondent, and bitter? To which of the other Powers? There are none, or none that are not in greater danger than ourselves. Such are the triumphs of the policy of strict attention to the shop!

We are not of those who think that the greatness of this country resides in her Eastern Empire or in her

maritime ascendancy, but it is a fair question to ask, what would be the condition of England and of English society, if the entire colonial and imperial fabric were shaken to its foundations, and commerce shorn of its cherished prerogatives and its chosen fields. This country would have to be reorganised both within and without—not for the worse, it might be, but under conditions for which few are prepared. Now, what is it that prevents such a catastrophe arriving? No man dare say that it is impossible, that the means of effecting it are not already in existence. Its realisation simply awaits the will of one or two potentates, cabinets, and statesmen. It is mere self-deception to imagine that they are incapable of such an enterprise. The Europe of to-day is not the Europe which used to fill the dreams about infinite Free Trade and International Bazaars. It is an Europe disorganised and with no settled relations, overshadowed by one or two military empires burning with the passions of conquest, and able to sweep it from end to end.

The story of the German Army Bill may teach us the true character of the new Europe of to-day. The Liberal party in the nation have obtained a certain concession, important mainly as showing that they are not altogether a cypher; but for the present the military autocracy is, in substance, master of the situation. Whether the solemn warnings of the German generals are *bonâ fide* or not, they are equally subject for anxiety. Whether they honestly believe that Germany is not safe without an army of more than two millions of men, or whether they demand such an army for

offensive purposes, war seems equally to them the normal state of Europe. The language of Count Moltke is precisely the language which might occur to the first Napoleon after the Treaty, or truce, of Amiens. And the majority of the German nation appear to be convinced that there is sufficient ground for Count Moltke's demands. It is now clearer than ever that the dominant military Government of Germany is in a material sense the arbiter of Europe. What is the ground for the trust that it is never likely to use that power to the injury of its neighbours? Throughout Germany a profound conviction reigns that, in spite of the nation's desire for peace, very few years will pass before they are again exposed to war. Nothing less than this can explain the recent votes. And are we alone—whilst all the military nations of Europe are thinking of military adventures—are we to rest blissfully content under our own shop-doors, confident that there is to be no wicked fighting; or, if there be, that we can easily keep out of it? When is the British economist to be taught that other Governments have not learnt the simplest of our copy-book maxims, that the national ideal of men like Gortschakoff and Bismarck is not the millennium of Free-Trade and local self-government by vestries and school-boards? When men like these strain the whole forces of their respective nations to the last ounce, and that strain has as its end the creation of the most stupendous machine of war that this earth has ever yet seen, the natural conclusion is that they intend to set it in motion. It is to them no royal plaything, as to so many a Prince Florestan both in and out of the

Almanac de Gotha. When men of that stamp elaborate a tremendous engine, it is destined to compass some tremendous end. What would happen if all that Englishmen hold precious in the East were suddenly assailed at once by the whole power of Russia? and what, if Germany were planted by campaigns of a few weeks in Denmark, Holland, and Belgium? It is easy to talk complacently 'of keeping out of it;' but every one who reflects knows well that any of these designs are possible, and all of them together; and their issue into act depends only on the will of some five or six inscrutable persons.

These five or six persons have undoubtedly the power, if they choose to exert it, to pull down the existing State-system both of Europe and of Asia, and to remould it afresh on their own pattern. At the very least they have the power to put this country in jeopardy such as it has not known since Austerlitz. There is but one way obviously of meeting such a state of things: for our thirteenth reorganisation of the army and the navy, and the surprising energy of our Lords Cardwell and Mr. Ward Hunts, does not seem altogether sufficient. There is but one way. It is simply the old plan of having an external policy—of a union established amongst those nations whose interest is peace—of distinct guarantees for the maintenance of the actual order. The old doctrine of the balance of power, grossly as it was abused, had in it a great value, and conferred solid advantages on the peaceful. It has been shattered by a series of grand convulsions, revolutions, and wars, and in its place there has been

set up a sort of national *sauve qui peut.* But all the elements exist for re-establishing on a rational footing a more vigorous balance of power, or, at least, guaranteeing the *status quo.* A nation like England has everything to gain by a healthy resort to the *status quo.* But to be of any utility this must mean not a negative acceptance of the existing order, but an active resolution to maintain it. And the only possible means of maintaining it is an effective combination amongst those States whose interest it is to have it maintained. Austria now even more than ever is a State whose existence depends on the maintenance of the *status quo.* In her present form she is doubtless of solid service to Europe, to order, to peace, and to progress. But she exists only upon sufferance. A word, a look of understanding between Prince Bismarck and Prince Gortschakoff, would suffice for her extinction. In a few months she would be, to adapt the phrase of her famous statesman, not a geographical but an historical expression. She is our 'ancient ally,' and far more worthy to be our ally than she was when she was the symbol of reaction and compression. It is notorious that she has of late sought to renew the ancient ties, and that these overtures have been rejected with alarm by our diplomatic shopkeepers. Of course to accept her overtures is to incur a certain responsibility, and to run the risk of a possible sacrifice. But ruin stares those in the face who never dare run a risk or make a sacrifice. As for Austria, she is alone and almost past hope. There is nothing left for her but to end it with dignity, and

to make such terms as her mighty neighbours can agree to grant her. Yet there she is still—the natural and essential nucleus of any European combination to maintain the *status quo.* Italy, with her internal difficulties, and the cancer of national bankruptcy eating out her life, is interested in the *status quo* in a degree only second to Austria. The drain of the preposterous army, which her equivocal position in Europe appears to require, is wearing down a fine people, and the criminal threats which she endures from the retrograde parties in France, distract her policy and paralyse her life. She, too, having lost all prospect of honest alliances, is ready to listen to any proposal which offers her a temporary chance. Of Spain it is unnecessary to speak, save to say that she exhibits all the evils of Italy in a violently acute form, under which she has long been practically erased from the map of Europe. To France the *status quo* is the first and most imperative need. And even if the dream of reprisals is too often indulged, it is obviously contrary to all her interests, and far from being really accepted by the sober part of the nation. The thinking part of the public, and calamity has made a very large part of her public think, are but too conscious of the futility of any such dream—are but too well aware of the jeopardy in which their country yet stands—how the great German Stratocracy thirsts to complete their task—how powerless is France to resist their attack. Rest, peace, things as they are, make the one desire of every wise French citizen. It is the desire, too, of all the smaller States, not one of which but is thinking of a struggle for national exist-

ence. Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, are troubled as the smaller fry are troubled when the monsters of the deep are preparing for great encounters.

Here then are all the materials for a true English policy. Its end would be as of old, the maintenance of the existing balance in Europe, and the recognition of the actual State-system. And not the passive recognition, but the active guarantee of it: for passive recognition means doing nothing. It would amount in truth to a mutual assurance of the actual Powers, fairly open to all who would consent to join it. It would be a Peace Confederation; not a mere union passively bound to observe peace, but a union actively determined to enforce peace, or at least to resist any reconstruction of the map of Europe from whatever side it might come. It would be an alliance strictly defensive—aiming at none, and open to all; yet an alliance actively defensive, and resolute to do all that defence might require. The enormous material resources of England; her inexhaustible means of production; and, in such a matter, her unimpeachable honesty of purpose, would give her rare opportunities for founding and cementing such a Peace Confederation. A hearty approach towards Austria, who has cast back her eyes upon her ancient ally after every rebuff, would form at once a rallying-point for such a coalition; to which Italy would be necessarily drawn. Such a coalition would be in a position to seek the adhesion of France distinctly on the basis of *uti possidetis*, offering her an alliance against any wanton attack; she, on her part, renouncing every attempt on the peace of Europe.

Amongst the main difficulties of any cordiality between France, Austria, Italy, and Spain, are the memories of the Lombard campaign on the one hand, and the clerical policy of the monarchic parties of France. But the offer of such an alliance and the liberal influence of England would strengthen the hands of the Liberal parties in France, do something to modify the rage of factions, and enable Italy to shape her policy in accord with France; from which she would then have nothing to fear, and with whose true interests her own are in perfect accord. A combination to assure the peace of Europe, which included England, France, Austria, and Italy could not fail to have the adhesion, express or implied, of the smaller Powers. Nor could Germany take up an attitude of defiance towards such a coalition, toward which she would more or less tend, at least in appearance if not in reality. For the Confederation we are painting would assume an attitude of hostility to none. It would be purely though actively defensive. Its avowed, like its real, object would be simply the protection of all by all. It would be a true Confederation of Peace; the sole end of which would be that Europe should lie no longer at the mercy of the great Stratocracies.[1]

We have now, if ever before, a need for a great English statesman. The position of England—the position of civilisation itself—practically lies at the sufferance of the great military Powers. If this be so,

[1] A curious instance of some such Confederation spontaneously arising, was shown by the attitude of England and its consequences at the Russian Conference of Brussels (1874), and again, at the English refusal to join the St. Petersburg Conference (February 1875).

it is a mockery to talk to us of Economy, Trade, and Non-Intervention. Something must be staked and dared by those who find themselves in a real danger. And the men who secured the safety of this country of old, staked much and planned many things before that safety was achieved.. It is not a question of war, but of statesmanship—of a settled political design worked out by the whole resources and credit of the nation. That design should be one strictly of peace, according to the old traditions of this country. There is indeed some reason to think it more in unison with the attitude of the Conservative than of the Liberal Party. It would be but the resuming the threads of the ancient traditions of that party, altered doubtless to new ends, but not inconsistent with the spirit. Since the abolition of the Corn Laws, the party which carried that measure have extended their influence from home to foreign affairs, until at last it would seem that their power was more in the ascendant in external than in home questions. The old official depositaries of the mysteries of English diplomacy have, step by step, surrendered their ancestral domain, and have purchased the barren privilege of being the titular directors of that policy at the price of consenting to shape it at the bidding of the trader. That strange economico-religious madness which inspired the peace party has made the conquest of this country and its destinies, not by converting the older statesmen to its principles but by reducing them to passive inaction. The fanaticism of the shop has so far mastered them, that the highest ambition of an English foreign minister is to say of the

power of this country entrusted to his hands that which the unwise servant says in the parable—'Lo! there is thy talent, wrapped in a blanket; I have done nothing with it, and gained nothing by it.' But the end of the most complete nonenity in life must come some time, and perhaps with the fall of the cabinet of the economists we have passed the lowest point of national effacement.

There is always an evil fate awaiting a nation which sacrifices everything to material results. We have had for a generation a prosperity advancing by 'leaps and bounds.' It has filled the national imagination, and planted itself firmly in the seat of power. Governments and governing classes exist but to minister to it and to do its bidding. And its bidding is easy to do. It is only to do nothing, to look on, to raise up impotent hands in deprecation like the old men in a Greek chorus, 'to keep out of it,' and to drive a flourishing trade. The official classes no longer ask to direct the policy of the nation. They are content to take orders, if they may still bear nominal office. The trading classes make no claim to the stately impotence of office. They are content if others direct the destinies of the nation to the end which they shall indicate. And the end that they indicate is to spread out the empire and the commerce of England to every corner of the inhabited and uninhabited world, to back up the planter and the broker in every quarrel he may choose to indulge in, to force upon the savage or benighted races of the earth the evangelising doctrines of Free Trade, to make all the little wars which

brisk markets may require, and to treat the rest of Europe as an expression made familiar to us by histories, gazetteers, and commercial dictionaries.

Such a course must some day meet with its condign end. Every fresh extension of the Empire beyond the Eastern or the Western oceans but extends the area of vulnerability and weakness; whilst the powers which surround its centre are gathering up resources with redoubled velocity. The phantom of a possible invasion of this island may at least be put aside. It has doubtless obscured the real question and turned away many a mind from truly facing the position. It seems indeed abundantly clear that a descent upon our shores for purposes of conquest is as little within the bounds of practical contingencies as its success is within that of bare possibilities. But having settled in our minds that no second William is ever to dethrone a second Harold, the real issue is still untouched. That issue is, if the general condition of Europe and the general condition of the Empire are such as to be quite reassuring, whether both are not easily assailable; and what are the grounds of trust that they are not very likely to be assailed. The problem for a great statesman—and we need one now if we ever did—is not how to win 'the battle of Dorking,' but how to secure the very existence of the Empire now that this island itself is reduced to the position of a big free port. The idea that the multiform British Empire is capable of defending itself against all comers is a jest. The idea that it is incapable of being attacked is an illusion. The fact that it is without hold or hope outside of itself; that it has

neither friends nor allies: has nothing but a few weak dependants who doubtfully look to it for help—this is indeed a reality. And it is a reality for which there is but one remedy—the formation of alliances and political combinations which shall restore this country to her ancient place in Europe, and to her old sense of security and independence. The object is obvious—the maintenance of peace and national integrity. The means are obvious—the mutual guarantee of States. The principle is obvious—the respect of existing conditions. But any policy is better than no policy. For it is the no-policy which has brought us to our present state of isolation, and which will bring us to the verge of that abyss into which a material millennium has plunged our neighbours in France.

ESSAY VIII.

THE MONARCHY.

[THE seven preceding Essays, though written at considerable intervals, and on different occasions, are placed together in a series, since they all treat of the present Parliamentary system, and examine it critically. The two Essays which now follow relate rather to the constructive side of the Theory of Government.] (June, 1872.)

ONE of the most cool and sagacious of the dignitaries of Oxford is wont to speak of the Republican Club which flourishes in that loyal University as 'The Society for the encouragement of the Day after To-morrow.' Thoughtful men, of whatever party, have long been quietly of the same mind. They see that the ultimate adoption of the republican form by both branches of the English race is as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun. But as a thing of a much more indefinite future, all practical men have agreed to await its coming; and the rival claims of monarchies and republics have been decided only in the bloodless arena of debating clubs, or by the fearless logic of essay societies.

It occurred, however, in the dull season to some very experienced publicists to force this topic into one of public interest. They seized hold of a few questions

about the Civil List, which had been raised by a Member of Parliament; and then these inspired journalists, these self-elected beadles of the British Constitution, scolded like Bumble when the little boy asked 'for more.' There followed the auspicious recovery of a popular prince, which our good-natured public were gravely assured they witnessed with transports of delirious joy. Thereupon the beadles set up a chorus of maudlin adulation, which turned the whole matter into a farce. In sober truth, there was never a sillier cry than that of monarchy in danger. The only danger it runs is that of being made ridiculous by officious sycophants.

The formation of a genuine Beefeater Party, whose political mission is to rally round the Throne, is certainly a new feature in party history. Still, if Conservatives decide to make it the topic of the day, Republicans will naturally have something to say. Not that there is much to be said, except to lift the subject from the cataract of cant in which it has been drowned. And in the first place, if monarchy presents itself as a popular subject of discussion, it may be as well in the outset to decide if there is a monarchy to discuss.

Our Oxford friend, sagacious as he is, has been betrayed into a somewhat ordinary sophism. Looking to realities, and throwing aside forms, the Republican Club which is the object of his wit is really engaged, not in encouraging the day after to-morrow, *but in accelerating the day before yesterday.* In the truest sense of the word, this country is, and has long been, a republic,

though a most imperfect republic, it must be allowed. The republican form, the object of such hopes and of such fears, is important enough; but it is, after all, a matter of administrative adjustment. The republican substance we have, or, if we wish to speak of our system with scientific accuracy, we should frame a definition as complex as its own history. England is now an aristocratic republic, with a democratic machinery and an hereditary grand master of the ceremonies.

For what is a republic? It is an abuse of language to make republic synonymous with democracy. There is no necessary connection between republic and ballot-boxes, stump oratory, and the rule of the masses. Nothing is more mindless than the common assumption that there is no republic possible but that of our American brethren. Every sinister feature of their public life is due to the hazard of their national origin and prodigious rapidity of growth, not to the fact of their having a republic. We, however, here at the outset entirely repudiate that as the perfect type of the republic, of which it is in some respects a very inferior example. The United States happen to be a democratic republic; but there have been republics without one of their peculiar institutions, or even a trace of democracy. Some of the most typical republics in history have been permanently ruled by popular nobles or popular soldiers. The Venetian system was republican, though as little liable to mob-rule as an Eastern despotism. The Rome of the Metelli and of the Scipios was a state directed by birth, wealth, and the sword of

dictators; yet it is still the type of the republic, and justly so. The idea of the republic, the only one which answers to all its forms in history, by no means implies direct government by the masses, much less anarchy, change, or personal licence. The world has never seen governments of more simple energy and self-assertion than those directed by Cromwell in his struggle with feudalism, by Danton in his struggle with royalty, by Lincoln in his struggle with slavery. The typical republics have often been swift, silent, and inexorable; and no monarchs have ever shown themselves more truly kings of men than many of those republican chiefs, who in the height of their power bore themselves as only servants of the commonwealth.

What then is the real meaning of republic? The republic is that state, the principle of which is not privilege but merit, where all public power is a free gift, and is freely intrusted to those who seem able to use it best. In the republic no authority is legitimate but that which claims as its tenure capacity, working in the interest of all, with the active co-operation of all. These are the tests of the really republican system—(1) that power rests on fitness to rule, (2) that its sole avowed object is the public good, (3) that it is maintained by public opinion, and not by force. Government is then a public function, and not a private property: it rests on consent, not on fear or right. Where this is the settled point of view of governors and governed, it is idle to deny to a community the name of republic, because it has not eliminated from government all notions of privilege and property;

because in the midst of republican realities it retains a monarchic pageant. Anomalies of the kind are common in nature, where an otiose tail may still be found in *bimana*, and rudimentary organs abound which are atrophied from want of use.

The definition above given exactly fits that character which the imagination presents as the typical republic of history. The majesty of Rome in its early centuries recalls but a commonwealth of citizens, each of whom owed his life and labour to the State; where no one was master as of right, where capacity to serve the State was the sole kingship. And the same halo of civic duty lights up the story of the Dandolos and the Dorias, the Winkelrieds, the De Witts, the Cromwells, the Washingtons, and the Dantons. No one can justly deny the name of commonwealth to the societies for which they lived and died, because in some of them wealth or birth retained great but undefined power—because in some of them the will of the community was centred in one iron hand. All held their power as of merit by consent. They were the servants, not the masters, of their fellow-citizens, and were sustained in their high duties by public opinion. On the other hand, in the true monarchies and aristocracies, the idea of hereditary right overpowers that of public convenience. The monarch says, *L'état c'est moi.* He is the head of the family, the proprietor of an estate; he exercises power, sometimes well and sometimes ill; sometimes in person, sometimes by deputy; but always as of right, not as the most fit. And, however he exercises it, the people cannot legally

call him to account, much less can they dismiss him. At the very least a monarchy implies that the monarch is the organ of public opinion.

Apply this test to our own system. We shall find that, in the reality of power, we strictly conform to the republican, not to the monarchic type. It is the most tiresome of commonplaces, 'that in this free country the will of the people is supreme.' Parliament, we are daily reminded, is omnipotent; and the House of Commons in practice is the sovereign authority. Power is, in fact, exclusively exercised by its delegates; and, though one smiles to say it, in theory at least its delegates are believed to be the most capable men it can find. The whole public resources are avowedly used in the service of the community—the public good is the paramount consideration. But all this is the definition of a republic, not of a monarchy. No doubt we have our throne, the most ancient and historic in Europe. But a sovereign who is wholly without influence in the action of the State is simply an hereditary president—or rather a titular appendage, an historic relic like the Rex Sacrificulus at Rome, or our own hereditary champion of England. For everything that is not mere pageant the country is administered precisely as a republic. The king here holds levees and drawing-rooms, in person or by proxy; once or twice in a reign is dragged about in a motley procession; when he chooses to do it, performs a mass of state routine, and, when equal to it, reads a royal speech. But it is part of the unwritten code of the constitution that he is to do nothing serious. The king cannot insert a sentence

or a phrase in his own speech. The 'Old Whigs' would rend their garments in sacred indignation at such profanity; the Tories would prophesy in the market-place. He cannot add a clause to a bill in Parliament. The very thought would raise a smile; to act on it would be revolution. The most silent member of Parliament has more legislative power than the Crown. The exercise of its legal veto would not be permitted in practice. A public attempt to affect legislation against the will of the nation would be the end of the dynasty. The British Crown exactly fills in the State the part which our ignorant ancestors assigned to the pretty woman. She was to reign in her own drawing-room, where no compliment could be extreme, and no homage unmanly. But she was not expected to meddle in things outside it.

There is only one moment in the practical working of our system when the sovereign has even in appearance the slightest legislative power. That moment is when a change of ministry occurs. But it is perfectly well understood that an outgoing minister really nominates his successor under forms more or less circumlocutory.[1] Mr. Disraeli once explained the formalities employed with that delicious sense of humour in which,

[1] It certainly appears that our present Sovereign, from long and laborious attention to public business, has acquired a mastery of the Constitutional machine, and has amassed a knowledge of its rules, with which perhaps no living statesman can compare. In the petty rearrangements of office, that we call ministerial crises, the part of the highest functionary is not the least skilfully played. We can, however, seldom look for such persistent industry on the Throne. And the fact that energy in public business as constant and as great as that given by the Queen and her Consort has had effects on Government so moderate, proves how anomalous and thankless an office the Throne has become.

without moving a muscle, he contrives to quiz the British constitution. In extreme cases a venerable peer—a sort of family lawyer—is confidentially called in. Even if we could conceive a sovereign so old-fashioned as to insist on personally nominating a minister, the House of Commons would sharply call him to order. Shades of 'the wise and good Lord Somers,' of Blackstone, of Hallam and Macaulay, what radical speeches would re-echo again from the benches of the Lords! The cause 'for which Hampden perished on the field, and Sidney on the scaffold,' would cease to rest and be thankful, and would begin to rub its eyes. The very lawn of the bishops would ruffle in wrath. We may, however, be perfectly tranquil. No sovereign has yet been seen to attempt any gambols with the constitution, any more than the cream-coloured horses are given to kick to pieces the gingerbread coach.

The sovereign here, as we repeat with serious pride, has no part in government. Every official is, directly or indirectly, the appointed servant of the public, as completely, though not so directly, as in the United States. There are hardly half-a-dozen posts (those about the person of the sovereign not excepted) which are not actually in the sole appointment of the ministry. Every question in Parliament, every detail of administration, is discussed with reference to the national welfare. There is not an institution, not a law, not a right in existence, which is not, both by the theory of the constitution and the practice of public opinion, the mere creature of the Legislature—that is,

ultimately and in principle the creature of the people. Nor is there one which is defended on any other ground than that it conduces to the public well-being. The notion that any person, any family, any order of men have rights paramount to the public good, or titles superior to parliamentary and national authority, or any existence or privilege not amenable to that authority, is never heard out of a boys' debating club.

It cannot be too often insisted that the throne itself is no exception to this principle. It is now frankly submitting itself to public discussion on the ground of its public utility. The subject is a very wide one; it will have to submit to a great deal more of discussion still. The position, functions, and existence of the throne, like those of the Church or the army, are as much within the jurisdiction of public opinion as the unpaid magistracy. If it were not so, the omnipotence of Parliament would be only a phrase, for there is nothing to tell us what part of our system is, and what is not open to change. And yet, with all this, there are persons found to tell us that we live under a monarchy.

That is no monarchy where the throne itself exists by parliamentary sufferance, and all power is exercised by parliamentary choice. Yet Parliament would not be omnipotent if anything existed contrary to its will, or anyone held power which it had not given. The notion that the throne, like every office in the State, is the creature of public opinion is not yet sufficiently familiar to us; for, as politicians, we are rather impervious to logic. But the principle has lately been

asserted over an institution which people once thought no less above discussion than the monarchy itself. The Irish Church Act, the abolition of that Established Church by the will of Parliament, 'by and with the consent of the nation and of public opinion, and by the authority of the same,' has finally disposed of the dream that there is any institution in these islands constitutionally sacred, any privilege which transcends law, and the law-making power. The most ancient title, the most venerable office, and what many called the interests and rights of God himself, were formally set aside, when the question became one of satisfying the people of these islands. The statesman who designed and carried out that act has since been the real head of the English republic, as completely as President Grant is the head of the American republic. It is true that our English president has far less power as a ruler. He is weighted with a gilt court dress, and bound in parliamentary chains. Still he rules us by a tenure of office even more popular, because more revocable than that of his American rival, and avows, like him, as his sole purpose the general welfare of the commonwealth. Mr. Gladstone, like General Grant, chooses the chief officials, is responsible for the entire administration, is master of the collective public action of his country, within and without. Like General Grant he is, somewhat less directly, but still as truly, elected by the people; like him, he professes to hold this great power only by their good-will, and to use it only in their service. He is somewhat harassed by having to run backwards and forwards to Balmoral or

Osborne, and to go through various obeisances and hyperbolical circumlocutions which, he seems to think, add to his dignity. But though these little ceremonials may chafe his temper and lessen his authority, they do not seriously destroy his power. And it would be useless to pretend that a government like this is anything but a parliamentary republic. The United States would not cease to be a republic if the framers of the constitution had designed the government of the republic to be carried on in the name of Princess Pocahontas, whose orders the president was supposed to receive in some distant recess of the Rocky Mountains.

The case is more difficult to analyse if we are told that, after all, England is an aristocracy. It is certainly true that it has an aristocratic administration; and it is an exceedingly aristocratic republic. It would be an error to overlook the immense influence possessed by hereditary wealth. But it will not do to exaggerate it. In what human society has not wealth influence; and in what settled State is not hereditary wealth certain to be potent? But the political influence of wealth does not constitute an aristocracy. A society governed by bank directors is not an aristocracy. Wealth is everywhere power, and, in a low sense of the word, merit. In an industrial society wealth is usually the creation of energy, foresight, and judgment. And it is not very long held together without some of these qualities in those who possess it. Those who accidentally inherit or acquire wealth amongst us have a better start for political power than other men, but neither wealth nor

birth can maintain a man long in political power. Birth, indeed, without wealth or capacity is politically a cipher. And the fatuous and needy heir of a hundred earls has little open to him but a wealthy match. But a society in which birth as such is a cipher, in which even hereditary wealth only gives a good start, in which middle-class ability exercises almost all the real power, is not an aristocracy, however much it may lose in self-respect by retention of a privileged order. The prime minister and the majority of the ministers belong by origin, and by every instinct of their natures, to the great order of middle-class traders. They are bourgeois even in their faults, down to their passion for economy. They are men of the caste of Necker or Peel, glorified bankers, or capitalists, with a happy turn for debating. Useful and valuable gifts, but in no sense those of a true aristocracy. No aristocracy in the world would ever have stooped to our base commercial wars in the East, and our yet baser commercial peace in Europe, *cauponantes bellum*, *cauponantes pacem.*

So thoroughly is this commercial conception of statesmanship established, that the genuine aristocrats who enter into it rather overplay the part. The foreign minister, a really capable man, familiar by birth and education with the transparencies of Europe, is conspicuous for an almost cynical deference to the majesty of British commerce. He almost upset the colonies out of respect to the memory of the late Mr. Cobden. In the great transformation of Europe which we have just witnessed he threw away every tradition of British

statesmanship, and thought of nothing but keeping a market open for British industry.

With such men for our actual rulers—men really chosen by the tradesmen as those who display tradesmanlike qualities—it is as preposterous to call this country an aristocracy because it still maintains a very select club called the House of Lords, as it is to call it a monarchy because there are court balls. The House of Lords, like the Crown, is expected not to exercise even its legal veto beyond the point of complimentary delay. The House of Lords is no doubt one of the many causes of the deadlock which seems destined to be the ignoble end of Parliamentary Government. But as all true power is vested in the elected and not in the hereditary chamber, the country has long ceased to be an aristocracy, though it keeps up the name by giving titles to a number of rich men. The governing class really possesses nothing which any rich man cannot buy, and excludes no man of brains unless his brains chance to look some other way. The present generation has witnessed, amongst the most remarkable chiefs of the State, the son of an actress, the son of a cotton spinner, the son of an ingenious author, and the son of a provincial merchant. These men were not mere servants or agents of any king or any aristocracy. They were masters of the whole governing class, and the real rulers of the country. They were indeed the fountain of honour for the time being, a supply which they and their colleagues turned on rather freely. Indeed, the Grandes Eaux of honour are wont to play on the least occasion—bankers, mill-owners, useful 'whips' and

smart electioneerers, peers who, according to Burke, came in with the Conquest, and peers who, according to Dod, came in with reform, have to shake down together. They all stand on much the same footing—acres and three per cents. *Non tali auxilio non defensoribus istis*, were the true aristocracies of history maintained. Our political system is possibly a plutocracy, but it is certainly—thank Cromwell!—not a real aristocracy.

There are hardly any States which are entirely simple examples. All have traditional influences and institutions within them. Turkey is a pure theocratic monarchy; and the United States a real democratic republic. Between these extremes the forces are variously mixed; and what we have to consider are the really essential features. Of all States England is, at first sight, the most curiously hybrid; but its real genus and species are quite unmistakeable. It has at once an hereditary monarchy, which is only meant to be looked at; and a powerful aristocracy, which has long been entirely bourgeois; in all the essential features it is a republic; to which it has added some of the worst vices of a democracy. Its democratic suffrage was never intended to be altogether free, and perfectly fulfils its design; its historic doge is only for exhibition on high days, and is fully equal to its part; the real government, in the meantime, rests with a moneyed caste, who, accepting the republican substance, do what they can to debase it. England is, therefore, a republic which, with a miscellaneous democracy and a titular sovereign, is governed by a sort of commercial aristocracy.

Those who imagine that the retention of the historic pageant of royalty in the English republic—a pageant which may have sundry uses—gives them the unspeakable blessing of living under a monarchy, must be of the mood which is thankful for small mercies. They might as well look on the beefeaters as saviours of society. The advantages of a monarchy—and they are very real in societies fitted for them—are that they secure permanence and unity in government, prevent the perpetual struggle of ambition, of parties, of classes, and the wear and tear of political agitation. The head of the State is not personally exposed to the attacks of rivals, the policy of government is not being perpetually debated, and those who exercise it are not being continually tripped up by partisan opponents. There is also a real sense of devotion to the monarch, as representing the public interest, and a rallying round him when his will is distinctly exerted. He becomes the mouthpiece of the common feeling, the organ of public opinion. In Russia, for instance, these advantages are manifest. The Russian people are not engaged in continually tinkering the constitution, and when their father, the Czar, really sets his will to a thing, instinctively the mass of the people gets it done. If he decides to abolish serfdom, it is abolished; his government pursues a silent, permanent course which our statesmen regard with uncomfortable awe. The will of the sovereign is a rough substitute for public opinion, which it partly forms and partly expresses. In Prussia and in Austria, though the monarchy there is far less real, still it is the effective centre round which

the governing machine revolves—the authorised exponent of the public feeling. As we saw during the war, and see now since the peace, the Emperor William is not altogether a phantasm-captain, and in great national moments his will and name call up in the mass of the people a real spirit of loyal co-operation with the government of which he is in some intelligible sense the head. The average Prussian really thinks in a way that he is bound to back up the Emperor's rule, and loyalty there still counts as a distinct element in carrying on the national administration. In Russia all this is true in a much higher degree. These are, in a tangible sense, some of the true 'blessings of monarchy,' which in backward populations is the only possible representative of the nation.

Which of these have we? From which of the evils of democracy does our dogedom preserve us? We have surely our fair share of political agitation, party faction, and personal rivalry. People used to imagine that monarchy averted the struggle for the first place in the State, and spared us from unseemly agitations. We were not like other men, they said—like those Americans, for instance. It surely does nothing of the kind. The first place in the State is that of the head of the ministry, and the struggle for it is as keen as if the title were president instead of premier. If Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli were rival candidates for the office held by General Grant, could there be more wire-pulling, more caucusing, more demagogism than we have in a grand general election? The election of President in the United States is direct, and our own

chief magistrate is elected indirectly by Parliament, and so far there is less unmixed democracy. But that is only an accident, which would cease if the President of the American, like the President of the French, Republic were elected by a chamber. The scramble for power here is as fierce as ambition and recklessness can make it, and the meetings and stumpings, the jobberies and the buncombe, the 'platforms,' the 'tickets,' the 'cornering' of this party, and the 'stumping out' of that, go on as briskly as patriotism and public spirit can make them go in our phlegmatic race, without the slightest reference to the fact that there is or is not an amiable lady of rank living a life of seclusion in the Highlands. People must be true disciples of Gamaliel who can lift up their eyes and thank God that we are spared the political turmoil which afflicts republics.

Nor is the throne even apparently the centre of the national administration. The sovereign here is in no rational sense the organ of public opinion. On the contrary, it is indelicate, and even dishonest, for a minister to pretend that the sovereign has the smallest partiality for any measure or any men. When Mr. Disraeli threw what was thought to be an intentional unction into the accepted language of homage, he was very justly rebuked. It is the first axiom of the constitution that the sovereign's name is never mixed up in politics. What occurred in former generations is impossible now. It is ill-mannered to suggest that he would ever allow a personal opinion to betray itself. It would be a breach of decorum to do so; for the sove-

reign is as much bound to keep his feelings to himself as any well-bred young lady. In consequence, the influence of the throne, whatever it may be socially, is nothing politically. Measures and administrations derive not the least authority or help from it in the way that Bismarck does from his Emperor or Gortschakoff from his Czar. The sovereign has as little to do with strengthening the hands of the real government as the Speaker of the House of Commons has. Rallying round the throne here means intriguing for cards to a court ball, waving a handkerchief in a grand stand, or a holiday and extra beer. The throne has certain social purposes, and some indirectly political; but it does absolutely nothing, like the throne in Russia, and even in Prussia, to give unity and force to the central administration. In the way of democracy it saves us nothing; and to attribute our political condition to the beneficent rule of a monarch is as rational as to set it down to our living under the mild sway of a lord mayor.

Does the monarchy again secure us from perpetually criticising and recasting the constitution? Nothing of the kind. There exist no people but the French who are so constantly occupied as we are in remodelling the machinery of government. Now a real monarchy does guarantee a people against this, which is, at the very best, a waste of power; a titular monarchy provokes it. The Russian, and even the Prussian, system presupposes that the people on the whole accept the general framework of the State; of all people, the French alone excepted, we seem the most dissatisfied

with ours. Our internal political history of a hundred years now has been one interminable history of reform bills and reform acts; attacks on the House of Lords, on the Established Church; struggles of class with class, and one order with another, to get power, and recast the constitution; ballot agitations, charters, reform leagues, manhood suffrage, single chamber, and woman suffrage agitations succeed in weary round. Almost the whole of our really serious struggles have turned on the persons by whom, not the way in which, power was to be exercised. It is one long series of constitutional amendments, in which every element and fixed point in the constitution has been attacked and defended, undermined, revised, botched, amended, and re-amended again, like the Bankruptcy Acts. The substance of the constitution has evaporated away in the fumes of talk; and though many of the great features still in form survive, how many years' purchase are they still worth, and what is the chance of the rising tide of criticism and attack being stemmed back? Now Russia, which is an acknowledged monarchy, is free from all this; and the United States, which is an acknowledged republic, is free from it. They have in America their own political vices which we are the first to denounce; but they have the immense advantage of an indefeasible republic. Slavery, their special curse, apart, during the hundred years that we have been tinkering our constitution they have been making and discussing hardly any changes in theirs. The American people are not only satisfied with their system, but have an intense devotion for it, because it

is a republic. And if they with their republic rest content with their constitution, whilst we with our monarchy are ever fighting over ours, it is a little illogical to assert that our monarchy preserves us from evils which in fact we have got, and they, republicans, have not.

The example of France is rather misleading. France is in a seething state because its class and religious feuds have reached a frightful pitch of intensity, not because it is a republic. In face of the conspicuous stability of the American republic or of the Swiss republics, it would be ridiculous to attribute the spasms of France to that cause. They are mainly due to the fact that monarchy in France, as in Spain, is a mere conspiracy. When the struggle between labour and capital, intelligence and superstition, has reached the same white heat here, if it were unhappily to reach it, our monarchy would crumble up like paper in the blaze. It is quite clear, as we see in Ireland, that it does nothing whatever to modify the great labour questions, or to reconcile the bitterness of religious war. It might very easily be converted into a distinct aggravation of them. The immunity from revolution, and the prosperity of England, are due entirely to the fact that the aristocratic bourgeoisie who govern it have not yet altogether lost the control of power; and that they have wisely averted or diverted some of the most formidable questions which hang over society. But in this result the monarchy has had no active share; or not more than the mace of Parliament, the ermine of the judges, or some other great historic pageants.

They have always taught us that the throne was a venerable fetish, wholly without active functions, and as such we must always regard it. It is a little too much that we should now be told that it is a real engine for solving political problems. Hallam and Macaulay, 'under the most distinguished patronage,' have hammered into us a faith in the innate wickedness of kings, and the dangers of allowing them a particle of real power; and it is a little too late, now that discontent is felt at the incompetent management of the State, to call out the venerable idol, and to tell us that it is alive and that we are to bow down and worship it. Whig statesmen have themselves deliberately, by their own acts and the teaching of their official schoolmasters, destroyed any vestige of real efficiency that the monarchy ever had in the political system. They have taught us to regard it politically as a sort of Original Sin. Venerable idol they have made it, and venerable idol it is. We read in Livy that whenever the Roman Senate was utterly puzzled or very much frightened, it straightway decreed a *Lectisternium*—a ceremony in which the old images were solemnly paraded. It is a little too late to repeat that sublime hocus; and if they did, the augurs would laugh so immoderately that they could hardly go through the ceremony. The present generation can remember the slights which some of our most noisy royalists have from time to time cast on the sovereign. Bumble has talked quite coarsely of 'the Board' in the hearing of the whole parish. None can forget their tone to the late Prince Consort during his life. His

ability, rectitude, and earnestness ought at least to have protected him from that, as her personal qualities and her difficult position ought equally to have protected the Queen. Our tradesmen now rally round the throne, and advertise themselves well at a loyal procession. To them the throne is the symbol of order and internal peace. So was the empire to the shopkeepers of Paris. It is the symbol, but it is not the source. To secure that peace and order it is absolutely powerless; and some most intemperate conservatives are now doing much to make it quite the contrary. The tradesman will soon find out, if this goes on, that the throne is really a constant menace to order; and the moment he does, he will throw it over as readily as his Parisian *confrère* pulled down the imperial arms.

As for the aristocracy, hereditary or monetary, they have a great spirit of political compromise. Whenever they find that the throne guarantees themselves against revolution, much as gongs and tom-toms are sovereign cures for an eclipse, they will be the first to let it go. Our governing classes, like the beaver or coon of our youth, will always satisfy the hunter when they are hard-pressed. 'Colonel,' they cry when the game is up, 'we are coming down.' And down they come with a really good grace, wagging their tails as if they were simply tired of sitting up aloft. In the same sense the real governing classes will hold on by House of Lords, Church, and Throne, until they see that they are doing them more harm than good. Comte always said that they had a remarkable instinct of self-modification. They made England in 1688 a disguised republic, and

since that date they have been slowly stripping off the disguise. It would be a pretty piece of political speculation which of the three garments, Church, House of Lords, or Throne, they will unbutton last. In an age when politics exhibit no social principle whatever, anything is possible, and marvellous transformations of opinion seize our people as if by special revelation. Future ages may see the Peers quite ready to take the plunge, throw out the Bill for shutting up their House two years running, and in the next glide into real power as county M.P.'s. So with the Crown. There is no family in Europe which can yield so gracefully as the House of Brunswick. Its princes, with their goodness of heart and homely tastes, would take their place naturally at the head of the aristocracy, a process already commenced by a recent happy alliance. Like the Princes of Orleans, they would easily pass into first citizens (by courtesy), remarkable, let us hope, for their industrious and high-toned lives. Who at Lord Palmerston's death dreamt of an attack on Established Churches? The handwriting was seen upon the wall with the signature of a well-known statesman; the Chaldeans trembled; and all was over. An age of profound political unbelief accepts the smallest signs. And, possibly even after some special revelation, having 'thought twice,' and avowing a 'sneaking kindness' for the institution, some new Mr. Gladstone of the future will be rising in a crowded House to propose more famous resolutions 'that in the opinion of this House, the time has arrived when the highest interests of the nation, and the dignity and prosperity of the

country, &c., &c., demand in fact a well-considered scheme—with due regard for vested interests—for the disestablishment of the British monarchy.'

To return to more practical things. Political hypocrisy has grown to that pitch, that free discussion of the institutions of our country is supposed to be sacrilege or personal outrage. To the silly and cowardly charge of disloyalty, temperate republicans show an open front. Those to whom the establishment of a real Government is all-important are not the men to be disloyal in the just sense of that term. They are loyal in that they respect the laws of their country, be they made by them or not: they will abide by them until they are changed; but their right to change them is the condition of their loyal abiding. They respect all public functionaries who honestly fulfil the public duties of their office. They repudiate all attacks on public functionaries in the discharge of their public duties—for each is the representative of the common weal—be that functionary sovereign on his throne, magistrate on his bench, or policeman on his beat. It is not we republicans who narrow down into a sinecure the noble spirit of loyalty, the life-blood of societies. We are for strengthening the dignity of the ruler, not for reducing it; for vitalising Government, not for paralysing it. But it may be as well to put on record for anyone whom it may concern, that this present writer at least has never confounded republic with democracy. It is not he or his friends who would teach the people the gospel of Equality, or the revelation of Universal Suffrage. It is not they who have

held up the United States as the eternal model of a republic; for in many things we hold it to be one of the worst. We ask for nothing better than a strong Government clothed with all majesty, provided the majesty be that of the nation. So far from proscribing loyalty, it is to loyalty we look to put fresh life into the commonwealth.

And as to the lady who now holds the royal office, it is certainly not we who would drag her name into a political controversy. They who can speak of that office without affectation, see perhaps best some of the difficulties by which it is beset. One who occupies the throne of the great Normans, of the Edwards, of Elizabeth, of Cromwell, of William of Orange, the successor and kinswoman of heroes, receives a halo from the glories of that historic seat. She, who by a tragic fate working with special circumstance, is widowed as few women are, by a life of communion with the dead, has sanctified again the sacred name of widow. We are not the last to honour that purpose which has made her life a life-long widowhood. Men who reject the cant of conventional homage may best judge how thankless a task is that routine which is the solid fact beneath so much lip-mockery. It is not we who are disloyal to the person of the Sovereign, not we who are lacking in respect for the woman when, cut off from that private life which is the glory of other women, devoted by destiny to a life of public drudgery, in a sphere which is one long phantasmagoria, she left society to its dance of fashion, to toil on silently at her melancholy office.

But whilst discouraging any disturbance of the

constitution, and offering personal respect to the first magistrate under it, we are certainly not to be debarred from this amongst other political topics. The air of holy mystery which it is usual to throw round it is one of the drollest bits of our social affectation. If we think the office an incumbrance in itself, however well it may be filled, we have a right to say so. And when certain persons think to awe us into silence with a tone of bullying pomposity, it is a little too much for our patience. Are a few jaded clubmen and the liveried parasites of the official world to brag about the throne like Jeames de la Pluche about his 'gracious sovarinx,' are they to scold all round as if they were hall porters to the entire peerage, whilst plain men are not to discuss the institutions they live under? A serious and somewhat melancholy interest is the feeling we wish to entertain in dealing with this ancient institution. We are proud of it as a curious relic of the past; we are touched by it; we feel a soft antiquarian sentiment creep over us; when we chance to meet it we look on it with all that respectful and good-humoured interest which we feel for any other of our quaint reminiscences of the course of time—for the Tower of London or Temple Bar. We want a calm and harmonious sense of studious appreciation—unbroken by the antics of showmen.

We are not blind to such positive advantages as we may fairly attribute to our own quasi-monarchy. They are not very numerous, and not very easy to state with precision. Still they ought to have every weight given to them. It may, for instance, be fairly said that, in

the absence of higher cultivation, the monarchy for some people embodies and carries on the traditions of the country, and gives a unity to our historical life very favourable to order and internal development. It might cause an abrupt gulf in our history, as is too often seen in France, if the republic was not felt to be the natural successor of the monarchy. And our actual form of disguised republic is perhaps doing much to educate us up to a peaceable and natural transformation of society. Again, perhaps the fiction that there is above all parties an ultimate arbiter with authority and with interests entirely aloof from theirs, does a good deal to keep alive, in the most desperate hours of party conflict, the notion of a public beyond and above them. There is in the sovereign a visible symbol of the nation which the most frantic partisans are obliged to treat with the semblance of deference. This is a real good. But we must not over-estimate its efficiency. That English parties in the main respect that symbol, conventional as it is, is rather due to the relative healthiness of English parties than to the native force of the symbol itself. They have a constitutional monarch in Spain, who [1] stands wringing his hands in the midst of Zorillists and Sagastists. When parties here have got into that mood, our crown will count for as little. And it must not be forgotten that in this as in all other functions, the part of the crown is utterly unreal, resting on a transparent fiction. The Sovereign for the time being now is, but might not be, really fit to act as arbiter in a crisis, and perhaps some day will no more act as

[1] Amedeo, June 1872.

arbiter, than any chance man or woman out of the street. The danger of relying on fictions which all know to be fictions, is that in times of excitement they are utterly vain. It may be that our people altogether are not yet trained to feel the existence of the nation except under the material effigy of a monarchy. But this gilt image of the public good can never produce that instinctive rally of the citizens round the republic, which we may see sometimes burst forth in the United States, to control the recklessness of party, a spirit which in yet higher forms rose into a religion in many of the heroic republics of history.

It is often said, and it will be said again, that the monarchy gives a high tone to public life, inspires it with sentiments of honour, and secures an efficient and cheap administration. There is no doubt that English public life exhibits a fairly high standard of personal dignity, an almost unexampled standard of pecuniary honesty, and much faithful and gratuitous service. The monarchy may count for an element in this result, but it is only a very trifling element. The fact is due to the general character of the governing class, who, whatever their defects, are on the whole honourable in private life, singularly pure as to money, and with a fair sense of public duty. But all this is only saying that the powerful orders in England have still the personal self-respect of a ruling caste. It is in a very minor degree the result of our having a monarchy. To set it all down to the throne is one of those saws in schoolboy themes—*post hoc ergo propter hoc*—which show the class of mind for which these apologies for Royalty

are intended. The same schoolboy themes might have shown how all these virtues shone ten times as brightly under the ancient republics. Indeed, our types, the eternal types, of civic honesty and public devotion all come from those heroic commonwealths. And are they absent from the story of the early mediæval republics, of Genoa, of Venice, of Bruges and Ghent, from the early story of the Swiss and American Constitutions? And if the United States are struggling now with some of the worst vices of democracy, their history can show most honourable types of patriotism and duty. The worst of their jobbers and hirelings in office are not worse than those who in different ages have polluted our own and other monarchies. Washington and Franklin may hold their own against Walpole and Bute. And then for the converse. The most corrupt of all European administrations is said to be the Russian, the most essentially monarchic of States, as in the last century was that of the Louises in France, where monarchy and corruption became convertible terms. The French administration and army have hardly lost in exchanging empire for republic. Spain and Greece are constitutional monarchies, yet no one would cite any one of these as high types of unselfishness in public life. Certainly the administration of Switzerland would most justly compete with them, whilst nothing, even in the vices of the United States, could compare with them. The fact is, that the honesty of public servants depends on the tone of the class which furnishes those servants, and has nothing to do with the fact that they are the servants of a republic, or the servants of a monarchy.

Parliamentary or public supervision may have much to do with it, but monarchy little or nothing. There are abundant instances of monarchies, the servants of which have been thoroughly corrupt and servile, and there have been republics, the servants of which have displayed the loftiest public virtues.

It is indeed true that the monarchy appears to close the highest place in the State to ambition and faction, by reserving as it were a supreme neutral ground to which neither can aspire. So far this is a good. But as we have already shown, it is only nominally and not really the highest place of power which is closed. The place of real power is the prize of popular election. The place of unreal power is a wearisome sinecure. And every year and every struggle diminishes the importance of the sham function and increases that of the true function. It is, however, unquestionable that the existence of an historic monarchy, wisely used, may be favourable for the time to a rational conservatism, and instinctively divert minds from thoughts of violent revolution. At present it is so. And this in our eyes, as in those of all genuine conservatives, is a good so long as it lasts. But then we are republican conservatives, and we cannot help seeing that an historic republic does precisely the same thing, and in a far more complete way. It is quite certain that the Swiss Republic or the American Republic is far less likely to degenerate into a monarchy than our monarchy is to expand into a republic. Both of these republics offer far greater securities to order and permanence. And whilst the conservative force of these republics grows

with the enlightenment of each generation, the conservative force of our monarchy by the same ratio diminishes. In fact, we already see it entering on the stage in which it will become a disturbing element. If there are advantages in filling up the first place in the State by a figure-head, there are disadvantages if your State chances to need a real head!

When we come to press home the positive arguments in favour of a monarchy, they are too much of the sort to which Falstaff treats us as his reasons for respecting the king, only they are sadly less amusing. We have had elegant essayists assuring us that the people must have a pageant—which might be a plea for Lord Mayor's show or the revival of tournaments, but hardly for making the entire constitution culminate in ceremonial. Certainly if the people must have a pageant, they get exceedingly little of it. We are told that monarchy is the theatric part of the constitution, though why a nation should need a theatric part to its constitution more than a man is not so apparent. And theatric is an unlucky phrase, when we remember the growing affinity of the stage for burlesque. Monarchy, we are told, gives a tone to society and domestic life, which is possibly true. But what that tone is, entirely depends on the monarch. It is happily now the tone that is given by an irreproachable lady, *esto perpetua!* but it is sometimes that of a debauched booby. When we reflect on the perils which surround virtue on a throne, it is perhaps almost as likely to be one as the other; so that particular feature is about as broad as it is long. The topic is one on which it would be easy to enlarge;

but by no means savoury. And on the whole it is an argument which it might be better to drop.

But there are no others at hand. As we all know, the monarchy is good for trade. This is a very powerful argument, and was always used by the press when the court was long absent from London. The late French empire also was good for trade—on the whole with doubtful success. Again, Royalty encourages art, fosters science; has given us South Kensington and the Hall of Arts. Ah! we were forgetting the inspiration which loyalty gives to art and thought. See the sun of royalty beam upon the world of letters. A king amongst us! Hush, he speaks. 'Il aura raison,' as the chamberlains say in *Zadig*. He has spoken! 'Il a raison.'[1] The sternest republican must be staggered when he dwells on the air of high-toned manliness, on that fine spiritual dignity which beneath the sunshine of the crown flows upwards like a sap into the fibres of the intellectual world. What Athenian nights! what Attic salt mixed with what Spartan pride! How the grace of the courtier but stimulates the genius of the man! Artist, critic, poet, are transfigured into loftier forms, and make a truly royal chorus singing one hymn—

> Que son mérite est extrême!
> Que de grâces! que de grandeur;
> Ah! combien Monseigneur
> Doit être content de lui-même!—*Zadig*.

It is reported, likewise, that monarchy refines the

[1] 'Le dîner dura trois heures: dès qu'il ouvrit la bouche pour parler, le premier chambellan dit: Il aura raison. À peine eut-il prononcé quatre paroles que le second chambellan s'écria: Il a raison. Les deux autres chambellans firent de grands éclats de rire des bons mots qu'il avait dits ou qu'il avait dû dire.'

people by accustoming their minds to tasteful display. A most valuable office in any nation! But a nation rich in Lothairs has almost a superfluity of this special form of culture. Lastly, we are positively assured that it gives a general tone to society. *O Richard! O mon Roi!* Who would rob them of that simple enjoyment?

To turn from the cackle of society to political argument. It will appear, in fact, that the serious arguments for monarchy all resolve themselves into this—that it is there. And this is a very strong argument indeed; in truth, it is a conclusive argument against any wanton meddling with it. It is the old argument which has so long saved Temple Bar. There it is. No one would now put it there; no one can see any particular use in it; everyone can see we should be better without it. But still the associations round it are so great, and the shock its absence would cause is so grave, that it is as well to let it stand. The monarchy, although a political nullity, is indeed associated with every phase of English society. It is the embodiment of the *status quo*. It is the keystone of our social system. Thus, though of very small account in itself, it is a most potent symbol. To the governing classes it is the sign of their right to govern. It is more than the sign, it is their consecration, the holy oil with which they are anointed. To them, it is what the Sacrament of the mass is to the Catholic priesthood. As the priest is sanctified to his congregation, who 'see God made and eaten all day long,' so the governing orders fresh from the actual presence of Majesty seem to acquire a power to rule the common. They come forth to the public

gaze with a halo like an Aaronite who has entered into the holy of holies, or like Moses when he came down with horns from the fiery mount. This is the reason why, whilst treating the throne with real disdain, they have contrived, by certain high-polite circumlocutions, to throw round it an air of sacred mystery. In fact, the governing orders in England could no more manage the plebeians without the mystical rites of monarchy than the Roman aristocracy could have ruled without augurs and sacred chickens.

To the wealthy orders, again, the monarchy is the symbol of respect for wealth, respect for luxury, and respect for an idle class. Not that it is itself very rich or very luxurious, or at present at all idle. Personally, the sovereign now drudges like a head examining clerk at dull, though perhaps superfluous tasks. From real work the office is debarred by custom and law. But a society which still maintains a purely sinecure monarchy consecrates dignity without responsibility, wealth without toil, and display for its own sake. They feel therefore, whilst the monarchy lasts, that their own lives and their own position are abundantly defensible, for they are but its faint image and copy. By a ceremonial crown the whole hierarchy of society, its artificial dignities, its religion of display, and its claim to enjoy itself for the good of the rest of mankind are all consecrated. It would be irrational to strain at the gnat of Lothair whilst swallowing the camel of the Civil List. The vulgar idea of a sovereign is that of a sort of Apis or sacred bull whom it is a solemn duty to fatten and make sleek for a blessing on the people.

And the idle rich are but too ready to suppose themselves local avatars of Apis; and most conscientiously do they seek the good of their fellow-creatures by growing fatter and sleeker. To the whole order of the wealthy and the luxurious, the crown is therefore a *sine quâ non*. It serves them at once with their type and their ideal—the symbol of their life—their justification and *raison d'être*.

To the entire middle class, from the capitalist down to the smallest tradesman, the monarchy at present represents prosperity because it represents the existing order of things. To them it is an institution to touch which would be to touch Diana of the Ephesians, the temple whereout they suck no small advantage. It is true all this is not because it is a monarchy: not because it at all produces that prosperity, but simply because it is there. In the United States the republic is just as much the palladium of the existing state, and just as favourable, indeed is even more favourable to the art of making fortunes. There the entire industrial and money-making class rallies round the republic with an even deeper jealousy than does our moneyed class round the throne as the symbol of the *status quo*; and it has the advantage of being entirely in harmony with all their other tendencies and interests, which cannot be said for the monarchy here.

Monarchy, in a word, is the social *status quo*. Politically it has no tangible importance, socially it is the consecration of the present. The monarchy is therefore not a political question at all, but a social

question. And since social questions cannot be settled by external revolutions, any violent attack on the monarchy as an institution would fail to secure its object. It would be like attempting to abolish luxury or suppress wealth by Act of Parliament or popular plebiscite. For a formal political change it would risk a critical social convulsion. The time may come when political problems of paramount moment have stifled all minor interests; when one of those mysterious revulsions of mind has silently transformed our practical people; and then the paraphernalia of the crown may awaken as little emotion as John Doe and Richard Roe. But without one of those moments of political transfiguration of which a great people are occasionally capable, without a fuller and more conscious mental preparation, without a real republican patriotism, the official disestablishment of monarchy would be no very mighty affair. It would not dethrone wealth, idleness, servility. The menial loyalty to display would be as loyal as ever. Lothairs would mount the vacant throne, and scramble for the regalia. The symbol might be discarded, but the thing would be cherished.

For these and many such reasons, there is little need for republican agitation. A bold movement against the monarchical formulas, even on strictly constitutional bases, would have no adequate object. It would be to attack the reactionists on their chosen battlefield. It would create a factitious interest in the throne, and give it the dead weight of the indifferent mass. As a matter of fact, no republican agitation has ever been

projected. Amidst masses of republicans there is no republican programme. Or if one is forming, it is simply in answer to the menacing extravagancies of the new party of Beefeaters.

Sensible people will, however, be careful not to confound practical acceptance of a *status quo* with enthusiasm for a cause. He would be a very idle observer who attached too much importance to what our young lions are fond of calling 'demonstrations.' The royal personages are themselves popular, and homage is felt for the Queen as a woman as well as titular sovereign. Our people are not insensible to the merits of a holiday, and as to a show, it is difficult to say what trumpery would not content them, or what personage they would not cheer. We see millions roused out of their vacant and dismal lives by a boat-race or a horse-race, though they do not know the difference of a row-lock from a fetlock. With the press stunning their ears with its everlasting gong, the hucksters shouting out 'to buy, to buy,' and the showmen with brass bells and trumpets dinning into them 'to walk up,' the poor public get as mazed as a bumpkin at a fair, and will walk up to any booth and gaze on any lion or any waxwork. The truth is that the vast development of the cheap press has given a new stimulus to all idle crowding. If 'the Wandering Jew,' 'the Great Panjandrum,' or 'the Prince of Darkness' could be induced to visit us, he would be dogged by special correspondents, receive 'stupendous ovations,' and be the centre of 'magnificent demonstrations.' One who quietly reflects on the vacancy of mind, on the

spaniel-like instinct which is shown by the crowds who will gather to shout at any Lothair's wedding, can hardly take for political sentiment the mere booby tendency to stare and throw up caps. Given notoriety, the credit of wealth, something to simper over, and the press to beat gongs and bawl one deaf—and any imaginable crowd will gather to see any imaginable thing. No rational being can draw any political argument from 'demonstrations.' We might as well study the public opinion of sheep jamming through a gate. Whole droves of these baa-lambs might be turned by two resolute men. They can teach us nothing—except it may be the growing vulgarity of wealth, the low state of general education, and the tendency of Lothair-olatry to become a state religion, with the monarchy, as its Melchisedek, its prophet, priest, and king.

This high attribute of monarchy to elevate the vulgar to the adoration of wealth ought not to blind responsible persons to facts. Now, whilst there is a general desire in England to maintain public order, and a general acceptance of the monarchic form as a convenient *status quo*, there is a very wide and deep republican feeling more or less definite and conscious. In London and the great cities the bulk of the working-classes are republican by conviction, unless where they are perfectly indifferent. There are a score of towns in the north and centre where the republican feeling has been at fever-heat. Through the body of the smaller shopkeeping class, loyalty to the throne finds its highest expression in royal footmen and

portraits of a princess: nor is it likely to take a more solid form. The heir to the crown is 'popular,' but he is just as popular in the United States, where huzzaing a notability can hardly be mistaken for political principle. And popularity is a vague term. In Ireland they are raising a statue to a beloved greyhound.

As we all know, amongst the educated classes there is a quiet pooh-poohing of monarchy as a living institution, with a tacit understanding to keep things as they are. We read gushing articles in a morning, which we trust may impress the people; but no man of sense speaks to another as if it were a thing to care about. We have perhaps a sneaking weakness for it; but a sneaking weakness is not a strong thing. We are all conscious around us of perfectly settled though perfectly well-behaved republican convictions. In fact, with most men of foresight the republic is to them what it is to our Oxford dignitary, 'the day after to-morrow,' or, it may be, 'the middle of next week.' It is a question of time, about which, as practical men, we do not concern ourselves. An effective faith in hereditary monarchy as a reality, and not an etiquette, would, in fact, be an effective repudiation of modern civilisation. Our whole cast of action and of life is now so essentially republican, that to any thoughtful mind hereditary monarchy as an active principle can present itself only as a conspiracy or a mummery.

Practical politicians then, to repeat, have every ground to disclaim an attack on the established

monarchic form. We must accept the *status quo*. As in all other cases, it is a balance of advantages and disadvantages, and as things now stand, the balance is on the side of the *status quo*. But in tolerating a *status quo* we ought not to delude ourselves; for, quite apart from the crop of social fungi which springs out of that soil, there is in the purely political sphere a *vis inertiæ* in mock royalty which heavily weights our English republic. In the growing problem of executive government, the one thing needful is to bring some living personality out of the hubbub of jarring voices. Each session, Parliament is growing more of a scramble, a free fight, a game of blindman's-buff. The great Parliamentary Babel is hopelessly stricken with confusion of tongues. Accordingly, with us the practical chief of the State is, almost for the first time in history, a mere gladiator in a crowd of rhetoricians, the plaything of a tangle of factions, of necessity a demagogue, by office a stopgap. In all history there is hardly an example of the real chief of the State, the absolute head of the executive, being exposed to daily and hourly rebuffs, liable to dismissal by a single vote of an assembly. President Grant is not liable to instant fall if he fail in a single division to persuade or frighten a majority. Certainly he has not to stand up night after night, and wrangle over the details of every trumpery administrative act. Something of the kind was, indeed, tried in France the other day, till the absurdity of the situation forced them (infatuated republicans as they are!) to separate the chief of the State a little from the bear-fights of

Parliament; and France has only had a government since the head of the executive has ceased to be a 'minister.' Indeed, since the days when Cleon and Alcibiades perorated to critical crowds, like actors, for popular applause, and ruled alternately by catching votes, the world has hardly seen an executive so utterly democratic as that of our present parliamentary system. The sole head of the State has to satisfy nightly a talking, intriguing, lounging assembly, while the entire executive apparatus and the whole government machine are liable to instant overthrow by a biting tongue or a dexterous whip. It is not thus in America; it is not thus in France—republics though they be. It was not thus in any rational republic or in any respectable State. The cause of it is, that with full-blown republican habits and ideas, with a republic which is a second nature to us all, we choose to travestie our whole political system by a monarchic figment; that we shut our eyes to facts, and refuse to see that the real master of power must be the head of the State.

The whirligig of time verily brings about its revenges; and it is a cruel mockery of our love of antiquated compromise that the very means by which our forefathers, in different circumstances, sought to preserve us from this evil have been the very means of producing it. It once seemed the acme of skill when they invented the dogma that 'the King reigns, but does not govern,' and they thought that the rule of ministerial responsibility for ever preserved the executive from the democratic assaults of Parliament.

They thought it a stroke of wisdom when they enabled Parliament to control affairs, without actually administering them; to dictate a policy, without overthrowing the head of the State; to limit his power, without destroying his dignity. Our good, short-sighted, worthy forefathers, were wise in their generation, but not wiser than it. They could not see the day when their wisdom should be turned into foolishness, when all their pains would tend to undo their work! Could they have foretold the day when Parliament and its creature, the mere breath of its nostrils, should be the true, the only executive, when the head of the State should be of necessity the nearest approach to a demagogue centuries have seen? They could not foresee that by inevitable laws society would become to its heart's core a republic, and that then their devices would have made its president the least dignified and the least established of all the presidents! It was not given to foresee that the day would come when the monarchy would neither reign nor govern, but live in retirement in the Highlands; when the true monarch of England would be wrangling like an Old Bailey advocate before an adverse jury. The elaborated imposture of the British constitution has closed our eyes to these things—closes the eyes of those concerned. But the facts are indestructible, and the truth comes back to us in each wild demagogic *mêlée*. 'Ministers of the Crown' they call themselves; 'The servants of his gracious Majesty,' they repeat with unction. And the Majesty of England, they say with bated breath and upturned eyes, reigns like a deity

above these sublunary storms. Alas! too far above, like the gods of Epicurus; so far above as to be a mere legal formula; and for any practical purpose, so far above, that it signifies little if it be there at all. Such are the phrases, such is the letter of the law; but the spirit and the fact remain that the sovereign executive of this country is the hourly shuttlecock of faction: and the real ruler of England, neither claiming nor receiving his just dignity nor armed with his due authority and majesty, stands daily like a bull at a stake, to be baited by a chorus of eager rivals. Such is the reality of democracy under the masquerade of royalty.

It is impossible for a mere 'Minister' accustomed to speak of himself, and to be treated in the tone in which ministers were once used to be addressed by real kings, ever to realise the responsibility of his high office, now that he is the true chief of the republic. The cant of 'His Majesty's Favour' blinds both him and us to the actual facts. And downward from the Prime Minister (and we say the same thing, be his name Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Disraeli), through the lower offices of State, the radical falsity of the conventional language confuses and deteriorates their service. The cramped and obsolete notion of loyalty to the crown chokes the abiding sense of loyalty to the public. There were ages once, and there are States now, where loyalty to a king has power to ennoble and strengthen the entire governing machine. But only is this possible in times, or in nations, where that governing body is crowned with a living and conscious

head. Where, in place of a conscious head there is only a symbolical figure-head, it is impossible; where the highest office is a sinecure, the principle of sinecures is dangerously fostered; where the highest office is hereditary, all offices will tend to be hereditary; where the highest office is a thing of property, and not a thing of merit, merit labours with a cruel dead weight, and property becomes the very principle of office. And when each one of these three tendencies is united in one, when the highest office of the State is itself the very type of all, when it becomes the mere incarnation of property in an hereditary sinecure, the blight descends through every fibre and root of the public service. In the true republic (and a society once republic is republic for ever, and can no more return to monarchy than it can return to feudalism, of which our monarchy is but a part)—in the true republic, the nation is the visible ever-present and ultimate master: from the president to the meanest functionary, from the highest function of government down to every button on every policeman's coat, there is visibly, indelibly imprinted the nation, and duty to the nation, employment only to those worthy of the nation. From top to bottom of the social scale runs the principle of merit; and office held in trust for the common weal.

Not that the adoption of the republican form in itself can work this end. No form whatever can. It is the growth only of the republican morality. There is many a republic grossly inferior to its ideal; and many a monarchy really superior to its form. But

though the mere adoption of a true form can work no immediate practical good, the obstinate worship of a dead form may seriously hamper growth. Forms are of no transcendent importance; but such as we have, it is well to have simple, and somewhat in accordence with fact. Now the great problem of our statesmen is obviously that of creating a working executive. The present is a wild jumble of executive and legislative, which each year more plainly threatens a fatal deadlock. The cumbrous constitution, piled with the ruins of earlier ages, honeycombed with compromise, and entangled in the weeds of unreality, is hardly a habitable mansion. *Mole ruit suâ.* The one thing that can save us is to free ourselves from encumbrances; to return to simplicity, to unity, to fact. We need to be rid of this labyrinth of forms which are a mere mummery; to get back to a form which expresses the real life we act. It may be that we have 'a sneaking liking' for the mummery itself; it may be that circumstances make us loath to disturb it. But it would be folly not to think honestly on all that it involves. It would be folly to forget that the tangle of administrative machinery was designed to work round an ornamental centre which is not now its mechanical centre. It is cowardice to shut our eyes to the fact that our whole public life, which we strive to make serious and true, culminates and is embodied in a conscious masquerade.

Are we to despair because the passage from the false to the true life is slow? Better than all attack on monarchy is the cultivation of the true republican

sentiment. That sentiment in its integrity is the noblest and the strongest that has ever animated communities. It is nothing but the most exalted force of that which all society implies; for it is the utmost distribution of function with the greatest social co-operation. In simple words, it is the idea that the common good permeates and inspires every public act. Government becomes the embodiment of the common good; to accomplish which is its only title. The one qualification of office, the sole right to power, is capacity to effect this common good. He who commands with this title in the State, ordains not merely with the whole force of a superior nature, but with the majesty of that multitude of wills which are incarnate in his. From the humblest official up to the first magistrate of the State, all who have public duties feel behind them the might of the united community. Every public act of every citizen, and in the republic life is but one long public act, is in itself an act of patriotism, has its bearing on the welfare of the State. The barren claim of 'rights,' the coarse notion of property in power, the sense of being born to privilege dies out of the social conscience, and from one end of the body politic to the other there rises up the supreme instinct that no function is legitimate save that which is truly fulfilled. This was the idea which lit in the mind of the Roman the thought of the City, as that from which all that gave him dignity was drawn, as that to which his life and powers were continually and entirely owed. This too, throughout the Middle Ages, was the spirit which inspired the municipal bodies to

whose energy civilisation owes the seeds of its progress. It was, in fact, but this spirit which in a crude and personal form was the real spring of that loyalty and liege-trust which are the boast of the feudalisms and royalties of Europe. And it is simply this which in the scramble of our modern society makes any government possible, or gives any dignity to our national life.

England is amongst the first of nations simply because it is in essence republican—because it has long passed into that stage in which public opinion is the foundation of power, and capacity its true qualification—because it has long passed out of that stage in which allegiance is an accident of birth, and government a piece of property. England is, in heart, republican, because it has asserted in all material things, past question and past change, the principle that the public good is the sole standard, and personal fitness the real criterion of civil power. Most imperfectly and half-consciously republican it may be said. The *débris* of privilege and of feudalism through which the republican ideal has forced its way encumber it still on all sides. The ennobling reality of loyalty to the nation is choked at every turn by the obsolete fiction of loyalty to a family—loyalty to a pageant—loyalty to a sinecure. The social might which should clothe all office is bedimmed whilst the highest is the nominal appanage of a noble house. It is in the republic alone that the true loyalty is possible or that true monarchs exist. In the republic proper there is no morbid thirst for equality, nor mincing up of power into the unpractised hands of

multitudes. The real republic, whose ideal is capacity, needs in its place each capacity; and they indefinitely differ in degree. Nor would the State be truly served if the rare capacities within it were drowned in the torrent of myriad incapacities. It is the republic then which seizes on the true eminence of its noblest sons, as it is the republic which alone can rally the citizens round them in effective loyalty. This spirit is rooted amongst us, and grows with each hour of progress. Each statesman who presides over the destiny of the country shakes himself freer from convention, and rises more clearly in conscious dignity to the height of his mission. We who call him minister are growing to feel him a ruler. As the ceremonial Majesty of the throne grows daily more alien to all our self-respect, the practical majesty of the nation becomes a more present force. It is the resolute assertion of this, not the stormy negation of that, which will lead to fruitful result. It is we republicans alone who can revive the true attribute of the ruler by uniting again in one the majesty and the responsibility—it is we who raise the sentiment of loyalty from the sphere of ceremony to that of public duty—from the keeping of chamberlains to that of citizens.

ESSAY IX.

THE REVIVAL OF AUTHORITY (JAN., 1873).

SECTION I.—*The Principle of Authority.*

IN politics, if we put aside the phrases of party and traditional cant, but two real principles exist: personal Authority, and popular Will. Pessimists are for ever exclaiming, that the day of the former is past. They tell us that each hour undermines the bases of authority, and the future has in store but a dead level of democracy. If this were true it would be serious indeed; for society without authority would be an incoherent crowd. But happily it is not true. Spurious and baneful forms of authority may be dissolving; but Authority in its true sense is indestructible. It is to this day as full of life, and like to live as long, as the principle of popular will. For ages the two have waged eternal war; yet neither can destroy the other, and utterly overcome it. The good sense of the larger, or at least of the stronger, part of mankind will suffer neither to oust the other altogether. We insist on establishing between them a rough and precarious *modus vivendi*. We feel each principle to be too precious to be finally

discarded; and yet to be too dangerous to be frankly embraced. Each principle makes a claim that it seems impossible to resist; and yet to yield it seems to threaten unlimited catastrophes. If we express these principles in regular formulæ, the first might be stated thus:—Government is the exclusive function of special capacity. The second might be stated thus:—All Government must emanate from the collective will of the nation.

Into one or other of these two, all theories of Government, absolutist and constitutional, aristocratic and democratic, with all their subdivisions and shades, may be ultimately resolved. For every party must have a principle of some kind at bottom. Mere interest is too shifting a base for any combination of men more important than a band of thieves. Some social faith, some reasonable conviction there must be at the root of every political body. Now a little analysis will always show that every party is animated by one or other of the doctrines—the only Good government is that of the best men: or else by this other doctrine—the only Just government is that of the national will. One or other of these doctrines directs every party; yet no party equally professes both. Amongst ourselves both doctrines exert immense influence in turn; yet never jointly. And neither of them alone can obtain full confidence. So inadequate does each doctrine appear apart from the other, that the great parties seem half ashamed of their own creed. Their main efforts are employed in attacking the counter principle instead of vaunting

their own. Thus our high Tories appeal not to the doctrines of authority but to the ballot-box and the hustings. They tell us that their mission is to stem democracy, not that it is to found Authority. And their method of stemming democracy is to work it themselves. The Liberals advocate the suffrage rather as the avenue for true merit, than as a pure democratic end. They labour to counteract the power of birth and wealth, and are only happy if they can handicap personal ascendency. But they avoid committing themselves to the theory *quod vult populus vult Deus*. No party then preaches its own creed in a fervent way as if it believed it. The very few on either side who have the courage of their opinions speak with the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Our greatest living Genius has indeed preached one of these doctrines for forty years, the Gospel that Power is the birthright of the Able man, and he has preached it to the winds. The counter Gospel, that nothing is good but what has been voted, is preached only by furious sectaries, who are useful chiefly as the Helot after dinner was useful to young Spartans.

After all, are these two principles finally irreconcilable? Are politicians really condemned to an insoluble dilemma, much as metaphysicians are pinned between the horns of Free-will and Necessity? We venture to think not. We believe that the principle of personal Authority as well as that of Public Opinion has in it an indefeasible truth, and that both are capable of strict harmony. What if

these rival doctrines be but the complementary parts of a single principle? That is, systematic Government by the best men may prove to be true expression of the popular will. The type of the Republic is the effective union of both, as it is only in the republic that they can finally be united. The political problem of our age in a word is to found Authority without oppression upon a Public Opinion without democracy.

Let us take each of these great principles in detail: and separate its central imperishable truth from that which constitutes its danger. The principle that power to be well exercised requires special capacity is not only a truth but a truism. Every thing that man does or makes, is done better by some men than by others, can hardly be done at all by some men, is done supremely well by some very few. The more difficult and complex each work, the more numerous the relations it involves, the more special is the capacity it demands. And, of all things that men do, the most difficult is the co-ordinating all the various things that each does, so as to make the individual efforts work together—which is the task of Government. The Philosopher might well call it the master art. Its importance follows from the simplest analysis of Government, and of Society. What, in fact, is Government and what is Society? Society, it is obvious, is the combination of many special activities into a common life. An aggregation of individuals or families each doing the same thing separately,

and doing nothing in common, is not truly a Society, but a crowd. The more completely specialised the individual functions, and the more general the common life, the higher becomes the grade of the Society. And Government is nothing but the general function which gives unity to the special functions. It makes little difference if we listen to those who reduce government to its simplest form, and make it consist mainly in non-intervention. For this is only possible when Society has reached the highest forms of differentiation. In complex human relations it often requires more skill to fix the limit of abstention than that of intervention. The minimum of Government in a highly organised Society involves a far harder task than the maximum of Government in a simple Society. In every Government there are the constable and the magistrate, the soldier and the tax-gatherer, and there should be something of the ædile. And these personages amongst them in practice involve very much. Wisely to determine and control the functions even of these primitive functionaries requires a true estimate of every special activity in the Society, and their just co-ordination. Indeed in complex communities where Government is almost negative, the skill it requires is not much less than where it is most active. And thus whether we mean by Government, a highly centralised autocracy, or the mere guardian of public safety, its functions are the most important of all others in the Society; they are at once the most specialised by their concentration, and the most general by their comprehen-

siveness. Hence they are the most difficult. Government is thus in its nature bound up with real, not artificial, superiority. Capability is its key-note; and Personal Merit is its essence.

It would be useless to insist further on what no one seriously denies. That good government is a work to task the highest powers, that the highest faculty for the task is found in the rarest natures, as a principle is a mere commonplace. It is assumed in every political discussion or movement. History would indeed be an old almanac, were it not so. What would be the meaning of great men, were it otherwise? Was it a mere mistake to have thought nations wisely governed in a crisis? Would any other man have done as well? And are political genius and force of character but false lights thrown accidentally on a chance citizen? Alfred, Cromwell, and Washington then, we are to believe, owed much to their age, but their age owed nothing to them. May we trust, as the king said of Percy, that we have five hundred as good as they? It is not so, and no reasonable being in his heart thinks it is.

But if no one denies the principle that the faculty for government is a rare gift, it is singular that we never hear it proclaimed. On the contrary, the commonplaces of Parliament and journalism all assume the reverse. Statesmen and publicists eternally repeat the very opposite doctrine. Every argument they use assumes that it is for the majority to determine not only what the Government shall be, but what it shall do. Legislation and administration are said to flow from the na-

tional will; and parliaments and ministries have only to find out what it is, and to do what it directs them. Tories use precisely the same language as radicals; only they contend that the majority is for them. The final argument in the House of Commons is that a measure is 'uncalled for.' The one side insists that the people desire it; the other side insists that they do not. Ministers ask with indignation how many petitions there are for the Bill, or assert with triumph that the public voice has now declared itself. The golden doctrine is to 'leave people to manage their own affairs.' In all this there is a great deal of running after the great men, but then the great man is he who can best follow the majority. The great minister is he who obeys the voice of the people. Parliament is to be the sovereign power, and Parliament is, or ought to be, 'the exact mirror of the nation.' Thus the grand constitutional ideal is attained. 'The nation governs itself,' and victorious 'self-government' is ever about to bring in the golden age. From top to bottom of our public life, whatever the practice may be, the profession is nothing but pure democracy. And the very authors of all this will cry out that the principle of authority is going to wreck.

How can the principle of authority flourish if those in authority seem eagerly to disclaim its very existence? Throughout all this flourish about self-government there is never heard a word of the counter principle, that good government is the most difficult of tasks, and therefore possible only to special capacities. That government simply means leadership, the direction of the inferior by the superior, and that

good government can be obtained from none but the few supremely fit, appears to be a notion as obsolete as divine right. The convenient sophism that the people are not to govern directly, but through representatives, that they are not to be ministers, but only to choose ministers, that they are not to carry out measures, but merely to dictate them, and to initiate them, does not come to much. They who dictate the Government govern; and they who are to originate all acts of authority do not much differ from being its masters.

This is nothing but the theory—the avowed profession. Nothing can be farther from the real meaning or the actual practice. All the commonplaces as to the suffrage being a trust, that it ought not to be degraded, that power should be entrusted only to those who have a stake in the country, the appeals against copying American institutions, the appeals to reserve office for social standing or eminence—and these hackneyed phrases cover often the most honest and even passionate convictions—all rest on the principle that some men are fitter to govern than others. The whole of the Conservative enthusiasm, and more than half the Liberal caution, is based on the profound conviction, common to both, that whatever their professions may require, in practice it would be madness to abandon government to the hands of numbers. Well, why is it never said? There is not a debate in Parliament, and scarcely an article in a journal, which this conviction does not underlie. And perhaps, except a small and uninfluential section, there is not a single party in the

State which is honestly ready to apply in reality the doctrine which is the logical issue of all the avowed doctrines—that power must emanate from the will of the people. It is the sole doctrine which they preach; but it is one which none will practise—and with very good reason. This 'unveracity,' as the poet calls it, constitutes a fatal weakness, which afflicts all parties at once. They all, Tories and Liberals, repeat a set of democratic principles which no one of them really means. They disavow the existence of authority as a principle, and then they cry out, what has become of authority? The very Ishmael of Toryism dares not assert that power is his birthright, but talks only gloomily of dying in the last ditch. The legitimate heads of the Tory world, as we all know, have rescued our 'ancient institutions' by means of household suffrage, the 'residuum,'—and the 'illiterate' voter.

They dare not, in common decency, put forward the principle which is doubtless their secret faith. Toryism really means, if it means anything, that the incapable should leave government to the capable; and our modern Tories do not venture to say that they are specially capable. To be of a good family, that is to say, to be the great grandson of Squire Western, or even the remote descendant of Justice Shallow, could hardly be pretended in our day as a qualification for Secretary of State. A governing class ought, at least, to believe that they are specially fit to govern, as our civil and military staff in India do, and even as the Prussian Junker does. But the notion that nature had specially designed them to govern

would be too whimsical to be seriously accepted by our Conservatives at home, who prefer to rely on the complacent fiction that the people wish them to govern. Thus it comes that they who profess the principle of authority give us not the principle of authority, but a travestie of it. They leave out the whole sap and life of it—its kernel of truth, which is personal capacity; and they are forced to do so for the excellent reason that it is the special truth which most conclusively disposes of their exclusive claim.

If government or authority means anything, it is something supremely difficult; and unless it is to be an intolerable evil, it must imply capacity other than capacity to do nothing. It is a mere delusion, therefore, to look on our actual Conservatives as in any special sense representing the principle of authority. In any rational sense of the word authority, that is as implying personal capacity, they no more represent the principle than do the wildest democrats. In the feudal system (the very essence of which was first, the responsibility of man to man, and next the corporate character of all government as well as of all education), birth, rank, and status generally, were rough and often very valuable tests of capacity. The heir of a baron, the next in succession in a close order or corporation were often the only persons who were personally fit to succeed to a vacant public function. And in a formal hierarchy of society, authority, personal capacity, and hereditary rank, naturally and often rightly get mixed up as interchangeable terms. But in a society where the hierarchies have been

finally dissolved, which has grown homogeneous through the spread of education and public opinion, hereditary rank, wealth, and status are felt to be very widely severed from any political aptitude. They mean totally different things from capacity, and often the opposite of it. And thus, if they pretend still to represent authority, they associate it with personal incapacity, which justly discredits it. It is most unlucky, and not very just, but somehow social rank has got to imply a certain want of special aptitude. Hence our Conservatives represent the principle of rank, but they certainly do not represent the principle of capacity. On the contrary, they are the antagonists of mere personal merit, 'its cold shade,' its hereditary incubus. And inasmuch as the principle of capacity is the only solid foundation on which any principle of authority can be based in grown-up nations, they who look coldly on merit are the traitors to the principles of authority, and not its champions.

The ascendancy of individual force of intellect is the only living form of authority; and this is a Republican principle. Indeed, it is the key-note of the Republican faith, and its true ideal. The passage from the hereditary form of authority to the personal is often a troubled one, and is thrust out of its course by many a democratic outburst. But democracy is only the revolutionary negation of false forms of authority, and from the nature of human instincts represents no permanent phase. When obsolete and oppressive forms of authority have been sufficiently shattered, and artificial inequalities and antagonisms

have been fused in a universal public feeling, the tendency of the republican spirit to trust the common weal to the best available guidance will become irresistible. Then the instinct which calls on each citizen to devote his powers to the general good, must force the citizens of the highest powers to fill the most responsible duty.

It is unjust to charge upon the people the actual degradation of the principle of authority. On the contrary, it is they who invoke its name, and affect to represent its mission, who are really the authors of its humiliation. The principle of authority, as we have seen, has now no meaning or root, except as it means the ascendancy of personal merit. All other forms of authority have now become but mockeries or caricatures of it. And they who are charged with upholding authority are every day trampling under foot that which is its sole life—capacity. They do not exhibit eminent capacity themselves, they do not honour it in others, nor do they speak in its name. Every interested appointment to office, every official blunder, every homage to rank and wealth, is a fresh stab to the principle of authority, a fresh obstacle to its rise. The exhibition of gilded incapacity in responsible duties chokes within the people the just reverence for merit, and drives us on the path of democracy with a power greater than that of a hundred stump agitators. The real enemies of authority are not the harmless wearers of caps of liberty, but they who scramble for its insignia that they may fill their own pockets and air their own vanity.

The only way in which the principle of Authority can be restored is by public leaders themselves showing a truer sense of it, and a higher faith in it. Let those who feel they have the power within them to lead come forth; show us what they can do, and tell us what they mean by legitimate Authority. It is shameful in them to do nothing but abuse the people who are crying out for something they can trust and hope in. What image of Authority is it that the Conservatives hold up to the people, what future do they offer them, what man do they show them as leader? Nothing, absolutely nothing. For Authority, they offer them police, justices—in the background bayonets; for a future—'as you are;' for a leader—'Us!' Turn to the Aristides of the party, that immensely sensible, just, and moderate man, Lord Derby. Now, he has studied the social question, the political question, every question, in fact, and 'ism' in the 'British Encyclopædia.' He sees that many things are wrong, won't last, can't last—in fact, he doubts if anything is altogether right, but, for the life of him he cannot see any way in which they would not be made worse. He is a practical man himself: he is the Industrious Apprentice of the House of Lords. You can all see what he has done for himself: by strict morality, honesty, and attention to business, he is what he is, with £100,000 a year, and a prospective ruler of the British Empire. All he can say is, have no false hopes, don't try experiments, don't be enthusiastic. Leave well alone—indeed, you had better leave ill alone, or you may make it worse. Give no credit, and ask none, be virtuous and all that, and, above all, be

industrious. Grand schemes are all stuff; Government can't help you; if we put you straight you would go wrong to-morrow. It is true you are packed like herrings in a barrel; but what then? If you get your neighbour's tail out of your eyeball, or from under your gill, there are two more tails ready to stick into you. You had better lie still; wriggling will only hurt you worse; be content with that state (of the herring-barrel) in which it has pleased God to pack you. The Church is rather a humbug, but you had better make the best of it; the House of Lords are not well-informed, but they mean well: the Conservative party have not studied political economy, but they will make rather less of a mess of it than the Liberals will. I don't want you. I can't do much for you. And I know no one who can.

The Prospero of the Conservatives, as we all know, has other and magical resources. Let the Calibans of the country party grumble; but they do his bidding. He has to play his own Ariel for want of an airy sprite. But he is quite equal to it all. He waves his wand, and behold, the Conservative working man! Democratic suffrage a Tory measure! *Similia similibus curantur;* the power of numbers can only be cured by giving votes to twice as many as have got them! Are you afraid of Americanising our institutions? Well, then, extend the suffrage, and have the Ballot! Are you afraid of a disease in the body politic? There is but one remedy—administer it yourself. Vaccination is the political nostrum. If you fear our workmen getting the small-pox of Democracy, give them the cow-pox

of Tory Ochlocracy. Residuum indeed! all the better for having no political nonsense in their heads. Look after the 'illiterates.' We can give them just as good words as the Whigs, outbid their offers, and undersell their trade. Why not Tory Socialism, as well as Tory Reform? Do not leave the Devil all the good tunes, nor the Whigs all the popular cries. 'Poor English curate,' is as good as 'poor Irish priest,' and may bring more votes. The Conservative working-man, with tea, cake, and noble lord *à discrétion*, is a better investment than hungry trades unionists. And as for the 'poor labourer,' how about the 'poor farmer'? If the radical critics annoy you, get a bitterer set yourself. If a cheap Press attacks Tory principles, pitch into every holder of Power or Office with tenfold virulence. If the Whigs are weakening Authority, nothing can be too severe or too personal. Personalities in a popular press are the real ways of restoring respect for authority. If you have any fear of popular license, just give them a taste of what license is. If Cleon has got hold of Demos, send for the sausage-seller. If it is to be a contest in demagogy, show them that we are men at their own game. Nay, if we must have something new, why in the name of all that is subversive, why not Woman Suffrage at once! Who is afraid of the ladies, who are always open to reason, and full of beautiful sentiment? What if it be the Radical millennium—it may play the Tory game. Faint heart never wins. Heads or tails! and the Tory wins with 'Woman.'

These are the men who have destroyed the principle of Authority. They are the loudest apostles of

Democracy—these the self-styled champions and guardians of authority. If the very guardians of authority are to outbid their rivals by democratic bribes, what idea can the people have of the principle of authority? If on the other hand Authority is held up to them only as possession—pure and simple—in other words selfishness, if it is something opposed to real capacity, to real leadership, and to real government, if it represents only selfish resistance, mock titles to respect, hereditary incapacity, aristocratic obstructiveness, a sort of patrician faction-mongering as Roman nobles got bands of bravos to crush the tribunes, if Authority is represented only as Milo and Clodius represented it in Rome, or as Napoleon represented it in France, what hold is it likely to acquire on the confidence of the people? To rally viciously round the last rags of the hereditary principle, to vaunt as the type of Authority, the crown—now a mere herald's hatchment hung upon the Palace of our ancient kings; a hatchment on which is written not *resurgam* but *requiescat in pace*—to extol, as the champion of Authority, a house of Lords which if authority means personal superiority is but the burlesque of Authority—to name as the party of Authority that great party which proclaims that nothing can be done and nothing ought to be done and that the sole function left to the State is to preserve them and all that is theirs—all this is to make blacker and more enduring the night of Democracy, and to defer the dawning of the day when the just influence of the capable for the good of their fellow-citizens shall be allowed its natural scope and authority.

We are not writing in the interest of any party, and have no wish to throw on anyone exclusively the *onus* of degrading the principle of authority. The difference which separates Liberal from Conservative politicians is not so enormous to a republican who desires to see all privileges and traditions give place to personal merit, to see capacity really governing in the interest of the community equally. But it must never be forgotten that an ideal of higher aims has been before us, that Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues have succeeded in awakening a popular enthusiasm by making it felt from time to time that they will set themselves to pressing national wants, and are capable of heading and organising public opinion to something higher than class interests. It is these inspirations of statesmanship which have justly given Mr. Gladstone the hold he has had upon public sympathy. *O si sic omnia.* It were too much to ask that the Liberals should uniformly maintain the spirit of their higher moments. For ordinary matters, and especially under any inconvenient demand, they too have a vein, a steady flow, of inveterate Whiggery, of those sticky commonplaces which so easily foil the old radicalism. The question is not ripe; the pressure of public opinion is not yet excessive; the country has not made up its mind—in a word, there are no immediate signs of an insurrection. Very likely not, but that was not exactly the spirit in which the dis-establishment of the Irish Church was decided on. Then, when a question of any difficulty arises, the regulation plan is to send it to a committee or commission, where rival interests are conciliated, much

as parties in a stormy meeting are conciliated by turning off the gas. By the time the commission has come to an end, no one can see the wood for the trees, and mankind accepts some 'as you were,' in sheer exhaustion and loathing for the business. As a mode of legislation, the commission and all its varieties is as hopeful an expedient as if one called a crowd in Charing Cross and begged them all to talk at once, or as if instead of building a house you requested the bricks to lay themselves. Then in all Imperial matters the great thing is to have no policy and to make it understood that you are superior to any such costly luxury. You are delighted to see Peace; but if War comes you trust it will be for the best; and a moral gentlemanlike War at all events. You trust that no one will be greedy or unjust. If any are, you trust that it may be from a good motive; but you would not for worlds suspect anyone of harbouring such ideas. Peace and goodwill amongst men and a roaring trade with all mankind. It is not for you to have opinions about your neighbours; it would be false political economy; if they leave the path of virtue their trade returns will condemn them. No one is going to attack you, if you don't put shackles on commerce. And if they do threaten you, Pooh! they will take money! This is what nowadays is called our Foreign Policy. Then there is if not demagogy something uncommonly like it, in an open bid every now and then for the support of strong classes and orders in the community. Shopkeepers are flattered by the grossest doctrines of a spurious political

economy. A striking case again is the mode in which the present Government have dealt with Education. A body of ministers amongst whom were men like Mr. Lowe, Mr. Stansfeld, Mr. Forster, could hardly fail to see that to strengthen the power of the Church for the future, to hand over to it the education of so large a portion of the people, was no real settlement of the question, and therefore no statesmanlike act. They know as well as any men that Sectarian State Education can have no permanent healthy place in our country. It is hateful and every day becomes more hateful to the growth of public opinion. To hand over by a side wind the bulk of education to a sect, which values it as a political engine, is to plant in every parish the poisonous seed of social discord. The sect to which a large part of the education was committed (committed be it said with a crafty and plausible decorum) was undoubtedly for the moment the stronger power in the field, and the most valuable political ally. For the moment the policy succeeded; for the moment it wore an air of equal and impartial good-faith. But for all that it was an insidious and demagogic policy. The most helpless part of the community was handed over to the hypocritical solicitude of the clerical allies of the rich. It cannot last; for the contests it infallibly prepared are already commencing One more social difficulty is embittered tenfold. Once more is education adjourned, and the Liberal party have bought a ruinous alliance at the price of long and inevitable strife. To play into the hands of the strongest or most organised faction is

not statesmanship or the principle of Authority. Nor again does it consist in exhibiting Government as the art of evading everything, of pitting rival parties to silence each other, of burying problems under mountains of talk and handing over difficulties to wrangling vestries. The type of Authority is not a Nirvana of Neutrality, a lay *Non Possumus*, with a substratum of electoral Hocus-pocus. They, in a word, are the bane of the true power of Authority, who prolong all hereditary and conventional claims to power, for this is the stigma and curse of Authority, who bearing Authority hold themselves out as the servants of numerical majorities, who aspire only to be the organ of some majority or of some strong faction, who are willing to lead as a driven beast of burden may lead but not otherwise, who are proud to go wherever they are pushed, and equally ready to stand still, as a mode of compromising between opposite courses.

SECTION II.—*The Principle of Opinion.*

WE will now turn to the rival doctrine, that Government must spring from the will of the people; and here again we shall find the same eternal verities mingled with the same dangerous consequences, the same incompleteness and onesidedness in the principle by itself. It comes out in every struggle in every part of the world that government by force is more and more distinctly hopeless, as impossible to found as it is inhuman to attempt. More and more the national will surges up as irresistibly and as silently as a tide. We should not know what civilisation meant if it did not imply a growing power of social co-operation, and a diminishing area of blind submission. The field of the popular movement is undoubtedly widening; and yet the theory of pure democracy is hardly extending.

But if by this popular movement we mean simply democracy, or government by numerical majorities, we can hardly say that the principle of democracy is gaining ground. On the contrary, recent events and discussions have immensely shaken its hold. The extraordinary revolution of the Commune of Paris in 1871 was at once the most signal failure of the democratic method as a governing machine, and at the same time showed the leaders of democracy

disavowing and attacking the principle. The workmen of Paris distinctly felt that it was the universal suffrage of the peasantry that had inflicted on them the Empire, and made possible the massacres of May. And to them universal suffrage and *plébiscites* have become another name for reaction. The history of the International Society shows precisely the same thing, and a violent secession has resulted from the efforts of the central council to carry the principle of authority somewhat too far. But there was a section to whom the spirit of authority was not strong enough even in the central junta—a section to whom Dr. Marx is a pale revolutionist, with mere constitutional scruples as to the rights of individual citizens. The language of this school—the *crême de la crême* of the revolutionary propaganda—is singularly instructive. They say in a recent circular, 'The workmen of the towns are only a minority, and must look to their energy and their discipline to make up for numerical inferiority. By this alone will they be able to paralyse the hostile mass'—of the majority!

And whilst the recent revolutionary movements exhibit democratic leaders denouncing the democratic doctrines, the same events show the fatal results of adhering to them in practice. The revolution of Paris of March, 1871, had in its favour one of the most marvellous opportunities in history, a material strength and a strategical position which chance had made almost boundless. It had in its ranks enthusiasm, intelligence, and courage enough to have sufficed, with such unequalled resources. Where the mania

for democracy did not interfere, its services were conducted with complete success. The management of the finances, of the post-office, of the commissariat, and so forth, was marked with singular skill. And there was enough ability for other services if it had only received a chance. The city did not lack capacity in various forms, and it possessed one or two men who, if fairly trusted with power, were quite competent to direct the movement in a political as well as in a military sense. Rossel was perhaps superior to any of the Versailles generals; and Todtleben told him that Paris was impregnable. If Rossel had been trusted as Todtleben was at Sebastopol, Paris might have held out for years. It fell, not from want of men or arms, skill, courage, or resolution; it fell from the utter incoherence which the mania for democracy had thrown over every military act of its defenders. No one who has not personally studied it can conceive the grotesque confusion into which every department of defence, every regiment, every company, was continually being thrown by the insane passion for doing everything by votes. When every officer came to be elected by the votes of his men, who debated in their clubs every order he issued, the power of delirium could 'no further go,' and a military contest was as hopeless as it would be on the part of the inmates of a madhouse. Since the days when the Greek historian tells us ships sailed out against the enemy with the crews of each ship carrying on a murderous party conflict amongst themselves, so extravagant a project had never seen

the light as that of defending a city by turning its army into a huge club, and each regiment into a political faction. There is something almost affecting in the sight of a population of hundreds of thousands full of intelligence, energy, and even heroism, as they displayed lavishly before their murderers, offering themselves up a certain prey to a bloody faction, because even on the eve of extermination they would not surrender one jot or one tittle of the sacred right of democratic suffrage. All social objects apart, they remain a monument for ever of the ruin which the democratic machinery pushed to the extreme is able to inflict. It was the suicide of the democratic principle, which offered itself up to extinction in a perfect orgy of self-assertion. If we regard it simply in the matter of administration, and put all ulterior objects aside, the story of the revolution of the Commune can only be considered what the ablest men of the party themselves consider it, the *reductio ad absurdum* of democracy as an engine of government.

In speaking of democracy, what is here meant is the claim of every individual citizen, not only to make his opinion heard, but to make his vote tell, in every public act, not only to watch and influence public affairs, but to interfere in them. It is the principle which is formulated in the famous 'Rights of Man,' that each citizen has an equal right to take part in legislation. But the events of Paris in 1871 are only the most conspicuous, certainly not the only example, of the inherent fatuity of mere democracy. From the opening of 1848 to the present day, the same thing

has been shown in fifty movements and on fifty battle-fields. It forces itself not only on the mere conservative or the mere reactionist (whose administrative theory is very much the same), but on all thoughtful adherents of the great movement of progress which these twenty-five years have seen, even on those who distinctly welcome it as a revolutionary change. This generation is slowly learning that if the social revolution (which grows more and more inevitable) is to be worked out naturally and healthily, it will never be by democracy as its method. The steady advent of a new society, the spread of faith in it as in a new religion, in spite of a thousand democratic reverses, and the confusion of the democratic principle, must have taught all men that the movement is something very different from democracy, and must have in reserve very different weapons. On whatever side our sympathies incline, however differently we may judge the aim and object of their policies, the generation which has witnessed a hundred defeats of democratic anarchy, and the signal success which Germany has won by the counter-principle, has learned a lesson about democracy which it never can unlearn. However vicious may have been the policy of the war, however detestable the temper in which it was waged, it would be childish to decry the stupendous results which the Prussian régime has drawn from an even partial assertion of the principle that government is the exclusive function of special capacity.

If we look across the ocean the same belief is

growing upon us. The great Atlantic Republic must ever command the homage and kindle the faith of every true republican as the great existing type of the final polity of civilised man. But since enthusiasts first vaunted to us American ideas we have learned many things about them, and the democratic principle, as one of them, has been, step by step, discredited. Although democracy has in America an opportuneness it never had elsewhere, in the uniform standard of education and the absence of all traditional and artificial authority, the warmest friend of America and of republicanism cannot shut his eyes to the evils of an incessant round of electioneering, and the habit of placing the entire administration at the mercy of the popular vote. It reaches its culmination when every popular swindler can hire an electioneering judge as easily as a coachman.

What is the lesson then? Are we entirely to abandon all faith in public opinion, in the influence of the people on government, in the admission of all to full political citizenship? Have we no refuge but in a benevolent despotism? In the name of human nature let us not parley with this inhuman dream. That power over men belongs to the capable is a truth, but it is also a half-truth; and in things social always a half-truth with a mission is a dangerous falsehood. This Berserker ideal of human society, is not a political theory at all; it is but the disordered echo of some old-world poetry. Sung to us with a whoop of despair as shrill as that with which the Bard defied the advancing hosts of our Edward, we are caught for a moment by

its picturesque fury—pause, and then pass on. The death-chant of the last of the Bards is left to the instinctive antipathy of modern feeling, and is seldom met with substantial criticism. There is, however, a solid answer to whatever germ of reasoning it contains; and it may be quite worth while to give it. It is indeed true that in simple and early societies a very great part has always been taken by pure Authority and by actual Force. Societies, like men, have epochs when the lessons of union and of duty have to be forced on them from without, before they have become sufficiently habitual to be adopted from choice. Children learn to act like responsible and just citizens by being trained to do many things against their will, and many contrary to their understanding. Just as caste, slavery, and war have had a power for good in the education of the race, and have an historical justification and value, so the coercion of unintelligent masses by the ruling will and intellect of the one or the few has its own historical importance and honour. The Thors and Odins who first hammered wild men into nations, are justly enshrined in the Walhalla of humanity. And there are crises in far advanced societies when concentrated power has been seized and used, more or less violently, by Cæsars, Richelieus, and Frederics, to the ultimate advantage of mankind, and certainly with full historical justification. But to magnify historical dramas into a normal political system, is to substitute poetic enthusiasm for political philosophy. Now it is precisely the mark of highly-advanced societies that their whole organisation

becomes more complex, subtle, and intelligent. Force becomes less and less efficient of good as it becomes too coarse, direct, and blind a power for the body it is to work on. In cultivated communities the spirit in which men live and act and react on each other is everything, and the particular acts they are compelled by the magistrate to do, or to abstain from, almost nothing. The healthy state of a society now depends on its citizens being of a certain character, and dealing with each other as if they valued such a character. In the infinite complexity of modern life, the intelligent, disciplined co-operation of citizens makes up ninety-nine parts of their social action, and what the law-giver and the magistrate compel them to do, only the one-hundredth part. Alfred and Rudolph had a totally different state of things to deal with. In those simple days the great object was to keep men from killing and plundering each other; and by resolutely hanging highway robbers and sacking thieves' castles, a good foundation for civilisation was laid. But in our day we can see how social evils abound amongst men who never could be brought within the faintest suspicion of law, and whom an omniscient despot could not make just. The evils which modern rulers have to remedy are incalculably subtle, intricate, and intangible. They have uniformly a moral phase, and are curiously mixed up with opinions and habits. Not but that there are not political problems of a high order, and that insight and energy are not as indispensable as ever for dealing with them. But the entanglement and indirect relations of every nerve of a high in-

dustrial organism, make any interference a matter of extraordinary delicacy, and force the entire derangement of the whole. In every high organism the vitality of the parts and the *vis medicatrix naturæ* are what the physician must rely on, and little can be done by mechanical violence, by forcing the lungs to inhale or the heart to beat. Thus in civilised communities the ruler has nothing left but to prepare material for the intelligent co-operation of the citizens. Laws alone can no more make such a community vigorous than they can make it religious or temperate. Heroic kings or Cannings cannot drill it into efficiency, any more than they could produce the *Times* newspaper by means of slave labour. In modern societies, permeated with education, and devoted to industry, the sole task of the statesman is to harmonise more fully conscious co-operation in the citizens. Thus public opinion is the essence of political life, and the ascendancy of a single will or mind violently imposed on that opinion, reduces the society to a discordant mass. To call in some trenchant hero to deal with modern politics, would be like bringing Thor's hammer to conduct an orchestra of musicians; would be to suppose that a grown man could be turned into a gentleman by being 'tunded' with ground ashes.

The 'tunding' theory of political regeneration proceeds, therefore, on an entire misconception of the nature of modern life. The work for modern statesmen is to promote a more zealous combination of efforts amongst the citizens, not to galvanise them into spasmodic efforts. The business of a ruler, like the

trainer of a racing boat, is to get more swing and dash out of the crew; and he would get very little if he tried to drive them as galley-slaves are driven, with a whip. In fact, the substance of the theory is an exaggeration of the power of the law-giver and of government—exactly the same as that which supports all theories of Communism and Socialism. Communists and Socialists imagine that if they could only get hold of the machinery of the State, they could suppress poverty, annihilate misery, and reward merit. Their error consists in ignorance of the infinitesimal power of Government to supersede the individual wills of the citizens, and the nullity of any authority that runs counter to the opinions around it. It is more and more true that political conditions ultimately spring from anterior intellectual convictions; and the attempt to raise the former without a base of the latter becomes more and more preposterous. It is also true that all great chiefs and rulers have been really the organs of a greater or less party in the State, or have always been as much the expression of their collective will as they have been the sources of it. Thus the despotic and the communistic theory of society spring from exactly the same sophism—that of attributing to government a function which in modern societies it is utterly powerless to fulfil.

The heroic king would never have been heard of, except in an age when a passion for historical tableaux has supplanted a taste for political science, and when practical men have been driven to despair by democratic fatuities. When we get rid of the habit of

associating progress with democracy, the reality and irresistible ascendancy of progress are clear enough. If we mean by political progress the consolidation of public opinion, we cannot deny that the future belongs to it. To compare the force of public opinion as it was in Europe in 1773 and as it is now in 1873, the stiffest Conservative can hardly be blind to the enormous difference. He will admit that the whole difference is bound up in the increase of popular education, of mechanical improvements, in the fusion of class under the influence of industry. He may not like any of these things; but he will hardly deny that they involve of necessity a totally new power in public opinion. Nor can he deny that they are all consequences or phases of the industrial type of society, gradually working out its complete development. But the industrial type of society is the definitive form of modern life, beyond which we cannot see or need not inquire. And so the growth of public opinion as a force is simply an epoch in the life of human society. Whether we like it or not, there stands the progress of public opinion, as inevitable as civilisation itself, and we might as well think of expelling it as of reviving bows and arrows in war.

After all, that a tendency is strong is not conclusive that it is right. But, in truth, the growth of opinion is bound up with all that is best, as well as all that is strongest, in modern life. The industrial society will be imperfect and struggling towards completion so long as the manual workman is not admitted to full participation in all the advantages which any

citizen finds in the common society. So long as the social forces are directed towards the interest of a class or of classes, so long will those outside the pale struggle for admittance. The social and political problem is the incorporation of the entire population into society. A very large proportion of it is still in the *quasi* servile or pupillary state, and is in no sense a source of public opinion. The final unification of society will arise only when opinion has become equalised and consolidated.

Public opinion, it is plain, is a totally different thing from Democracy, though often confounded with it. Democracy, as in the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man,' supposes equal rights and equivalent voting power in each individual, and a constant appeal to the test of a positive vote. In Democracy each unit is strictly assumed to be the equivalent of every other, and the collective units to be immeasurably more strong, wise, and authoritative than any possible single unit. Now public opinion abhors this fatal mathematical equality, this absurd multiplication of ciphers. Public opinion is, on the contrary, eminently elastic. The strong will and the clear thought count with it for thousands, and outweigh thousands, when the mechanical process of voting would bring out the force of cipherdom. In a system of active public opinion it is quite natural for a society to be kept in the right path, silently approving and insensibly modifying the leadership of the most capable citizen, whom it maintains half understanding, half accepting on trust, and yet that this very same society, if driven under material agitation to formulate its opinions and express them

in a vote, should discard the direction it had willingly accepted, and contradict its own half-conscious intentions.

But, in the widest sense of Public Opinion, that is the intelligent co-operation of the citizens in modifying the action of the community, every year, each event, all sides of life testify to its triumphant course. Our own history which so often appears but a stumbling rush towards Democracy, in all its solid and healthy features resolves itself into this. What on the surface are but a series of concessions to Democracy wrung out by fear, or flung out as bribes, and a series of rallies by the rich and the powerful to retain their monopolies, will appear when we count the permanent gain and change, to be slow but serious advances towards a higher sense of public opinion. In Germany the most astounding triumph of Authority which modern history contains is but the prelude to an immediate outburst of Public Opinion. We see it transforming Bismarck into a Liberal. The tension of war is relaxed, the smoke of battle clears away, and we breathe a new atmosphere, and hope for a new era. The very Empire is becoming, against its will, and with strange perversion, watchful of the intelligent action of the citizens. In France, amidst all the horrors and discord of her crisis, we can see how widely still 1873 differs from 1850, how in a generation the force of public opinion in the intelligent has sprung above the reach of oligarchic conspirators and the arts of an imperial democracy. All roads

lead to Rome, and wars, revolutions, agitations, the desperate plots of Conservatism, and the noisy welter of Democracy, have but one issue, which is to secure to the intelligent union of the citizens the practical control of their destinies.

SECTION III.—*The Reconciliation.*

THUS far our analysis has shown us a pair of principles which are correlative, and yet antagonistic. Each by itself degenerates into an intolerable evil; each is alike indispensable. Benevolent despotism is the parody of personal ascendancy, just as democracy is the parody of popular influence in government. It is quite certain that societies which give incapacity equal power with capacity are doomed, and equally certain that those too are doomed on which capacity or incapacity forcibly endeavours to impose its will. On the one hand we must have real leadership, on the other we must have genuine consent. All is lost if we leave rule to numbers, all is lost if we ignore numbers. Mere manipulations of the suffrage give us no fresh force of assent; whilst they certainly are a singular mode of establishing authority. On the other hand, an angel from heaven would be powerless as a ruler, unless he was aided by active co-operation in the people. What are the conditions under which these two principles will combine, how is each to supplement and correct the other, without prolonging the conflict in which they have been eternally engaged? Can they ever be brought to work in union instead of working alternately or contradictorily?

In the first place, let us make up our minds that there is no royal road or ingenious device whereby the two principles may be got to pull together. All the institutions and machinery in the world will never reconcile two such distinct powers. Their harmony is entirely a matter of tact and practical sense. To lay down constitutions for making personal authority compatible with popular will would be like drawing up a Bill of Rights to promote harmony between husband and wife. The efficient union of the two principles is scarcely less subtle, spontaneous, and intangible. The greater the amount of the machinery, the less the prospect of union. The utmost simplicity is necessary in the apparatus. Let us indeed finally dismiss the idea that any revision of the voting or representative apparatus is to establish a self-working system of balances and checks. In politics of all things pedantry is the most criminal folly. The working out of a healthy political system is a task of long and constant effort, and means nothing but sounder habits of thinking and acting in public men and the public mind. New tones of feeling, not new mechanisms, are the sources of it. Everything else is charlatanism or pedantry. The one habit that can foster political advancement is that of sounder thoughts and higher purposes in ruler and ruled. The whole political problem is simply how to educate men to be of a certain opinion and temper.

The mark of the true ruler is that he avoid equally two great dangers, so as neither to make himself the mouthpiece of the most numerous party, nor, on the

other hand, to force his will on a resisting people. It is an utter misconception to assume that the inevitable expansion of public opinion for the future makes impossible the ascendancy of the individual and leaves us no issue but in simple democracy. It is true that the progress of opinion, the growing participation of all in public affairs has for ever made impossible the violent coercion of a people by the will of any leader, good or bad. Pessimism is a philosophy as silly as it is cynical; and the philosophy which is for ever growling about this hideous welter has grown as wearisome as it is certainly unpractical. It strangely distorts the prospect. The future has a field for great statesmanship and heroic leaders of men such as the past cannot show, a field all the grander both morally and intellectually because it is essentially Republican in its nature, and consists therefore in the free leadership of intelligent wills, that it calls out the resources of a far more subtle and spiritual force, that it will give a far loftier power, because it will be the embodiment of more elevated units. The Republican chief may have less of that barbaric power of the sword which attracts some minds towards the old-world king, but he will be as superior to him in true power and dignity as the modern Chancellor is to the patriarch of some savage tribe.

From the republican point of view, the danger of our parliamentary machinery is not that it gives us too little of democracy, as that it tends to give us too much. The theory that parliament is to be the mere mirror of the nation, that it is to be the servant of the

people and never to do anything till it is ordered from below, is fast gaining such a hold on the minds of politicians as will take all initiating and controlling vigour out of them. The business of the statesman is to be the servant of the people, in the sense in which the Pope is *servus servorum*, as working in their service, but not as the instrument of their orders. The statesman who is worth his salt has to be continually initiating, devising, suggesting. He has often to create a public opinion, to modify it, never to be its tool. The democratic fallacy and the heroic king fallacy proceed from the same root of error. The democratic fallacy assumes that the people will always best know what is good for them; and the heroic king fallacy assumes that all that is wanted is to force mobs into order and quiet. Both alike forget that in the subtle organism of modern societies the only sound methods of treatment are methods of extraordinary complication and delicacy. When the old democratic doctrines grew up, what was wanted, or at least wanted immediately, was the redress of grievances, and the removal of glaring abuses. On the other hand, the great task of Government was to suppress crimes of violence, and enforce the regular course of justice. We have long left both behind. Societies like generations of men throw up their own special maladies; and old states necessarily breed diseases of a deep-seated kind. Abuses in them are neither glaring nor obvious, but infinitely insidious, concealed, and complicated. Grievances are not found on the surface irritating the skin, but they wear away the marrow of the bones, and linger in the joints, blight-

ing and deranging each organ in turn. They may be diagnosed and even cured by infinite patience and skill; but the tracing their secret causes and consequences requires consummate sagacity, and their healing is a task of prolonged and refined artifice. It is as false to regard them as incapable of cure as to think them curable by drastic remedies. With diseases of this sort to deal with, the modern statesman needs to be perpetually watching, calculating, and acting. It would be preposterous to leave these difficult tasks to popular initiative; and yet when the remedy is found it can only be applied by popular support. Thus the statesman has to be for ever modifying public opinion, and to be for ever modified by it. He must strain every nerve to carry the right measure to completion, short of the point where it meets with fixed and invincible opposition. He must never force, and never be forced. He must create the opinion on which alone he rests for strength—create it by honestly forcing the conviction that he is right, not by manipulating electoral strings. The body on which he works is as changeful as the sea; yet it has currents as irresistible as the tide. But he is as little to be carried hither and thither by the breath of every wind as he is to brace himself to beat back the set of the tide.

All this does not imply that the statesman must wait till he has won the suffrage of an absolute majority. He might wait long enough for that. The force of public opinion is assuredly nothing numerical, for the social strength of a conviction in a cultivated community can rarely be expressed by counting of

heads. The organised resolve of one-tenth of the community is often a greater power than the flabby velleities of the other nine-tenths. How often do we see in every meeting, or group, or committee, the clear intelligence and will of one arrest the floating indecision of the rest and spring to the command, if not with the active support at least with the passive assent of the rest. And yet these very men who unconsciously yield to the ascendancy of the superior nature amidst them, if the ballot-box were carried round would belie their own judgment and go back upon their formal decisions. Almost all great things for a time have rested in the energies of a small minority, and most great changes in history have shown a resolute few asserting the ascendancy of conviction. In politics the battle is with the strong few, but only on one condition—that the many can be brought to yield to them at the time, and heartily and intelligently to join them soon. On these terms alone the ascendancy of a section can be permanent and sound, or the rule of a statesman be other than oppressive.

It is not easy to find in history practical types of such an authority, of the government of the capable man, himself but the organ of energetic public opinion. The reason is on the surface; for it is but a generation or two that the republican aspect of public opinion has attained its full proportions, and where this has been done, it has been forced by circumstances into a revolutionary struggle or into democratic distortion. The statesmen of earlier times were great men, but they were types of a different order; they belonged to

the military imperial caste, and they ruled as the chiefs of an army, not as the leaders of citizens. The great Frederic will long be remembered as the type of the organiser of nations, though the age which has witnessed the astounding results of his policy has hardly yet done justice to the founder of German efficiency. But Frederic was at least as much the commander of an army as he was the ruler of a nation, and in one capacity as much as the other he was ever the soldier, booted and spurred. The Prussian people, it was proved by their utter collapse before the blows of revolutionary France, had not then the disciplined intelligence which alone makes possible the truly republican chief. The heavings of revolution in France exhibit to us, within a century, some glimpses of such a type, but under conditions of spasm so intense as leave but little of normal character. The greatest of modern statesmen—Cavour—presents in all essentials the type of such a ruler, but it would be a stretch of courtesy to regard him as an organ of real national opinion. The mass of the Italian people are far too disorganised, and have far too little of political cultivation, to be looked on as a type of a republican community. Cavour, a born statesman in every fibre, had to find the support of his consummate policy largely in the prestige of a military monarchy, and mainly in the discipline of a *bourgeoise* aristocracy. A truer type of the real republican chief, even if it be a very inferior man, may be found in the career of President Lincoln. Towards the close of the civil war, and especially at the approach of his second presidency, when the whole

energies of the Northern States had been kindled into a glowing unity of action, the democratic discords were hushed and demagogic fatuities were spurned. Then he, in part the representative, in part the author, of public opinion, borne along by the will of the best portion of the nation, yet ever controlling its action and extending its depth and breadth, received as the free gift of fellow-citizens in intense sympathy with him a power as vast as was ever borne by emperor or king, a power which had no duration beyond the moment when he might cease to be in unison with the common will, a power which he could not convert to combat or destroy that will. We saw him ever watching the growth of opinion, striving to raise it to the true level, yet resolved never to outrage it, working to convert a growing minority into a visible majority, yet careful never to force the majority nor any section of it that would abstain from actual war. It was a great moment, which raised both the people and their head far up above their natural selves. Their chief was stronger for good than any despot has been, for his strength rested not on bayonets, but the concentrated will of citizens. And the American people have never been so truly republican, for the majesty of public opinion was never so nobly revealed, as when the whole power of the Republic was freely yet watchfully committed to the hand of an eminent citizen.

What are the conditions under which this great concentration of power may be made without risk of oppression? The first is surely that the ruler should be entrusted with great functions, but not with material

force which could ever make him independent of opinion. In spite of the paradoxes we often hear, few things are more different than the various forms of power. By way of illustration, we can easily conceive a statesman intrusted with the task of recasting the entire law of property, or even the whole civil and criminal code, and yet have no force to rely on but a few secretaries. Yet if the legislative power of the country had chosen to accept him as its organ, such an one would be more powerful than an emperor with a million bayonets, and bayonets could add nothing to his power. The grand condition of such government must necessarily be that a state of public opinion should grow up, such as to confide immense tasks to men, whilst withholding from them the material means of enforcing them. We are so much in the habit of associating great power with material force, that we forget that consent may give a power far higher than any material force. All that is needed is a temper in the public mind such that the difficult tasks of the State must be freely intrusted to competent heads, and a temper in public men such that power may be intrusted to them without their attempting to convert it into force. It is a change in the point of view of politics, and nothing more. A great change, unquestionably, but not one beyond the power of persistent education to produce. The great obstacle in the way of granting such power is to be found in the inveterate class instincts and military tendencies which the rulers of the old world have brought to their office. But once show to us a succession of rulers as free from the spirit of privilege and of war as the statesmen of America are compelled

to be, and there would no longer exist any jealousy, as there would exist no longer any danger, in intrusting them with immense national mandates.

The second condition flows from, and completes the first. As the ruler must never be sustained by military force, so he must never be intrusted with the power of taxation. The extent and the mode in which revenue shall be extracted from the people is a totally different thing from the management of any public service; and it is moreover a duty which peculiarly belongs, and indeed only belongs, to the people and their representatives. It is most right that the ruler of whatever kind, and whatever be the scope to which his functions may be stretched, should depend for the material means of exercising them on the grants which he can show to be properly needed. The completeness and sagacity with which generations of Parliaments in England have established their control over public expenditure leave almost nothing to be desired or amended. The 'power of the Purse' is indeed the great achievement of our English parliamentary system, its great contribution to the political art. So long as that is maintained there can be little real danger of a Government without any serious army, however great were its mandates, ever degenerating into a tyranny.

The power of the purse is the central function of Parliament, and that which makes it incapable of being ever replaced, but there are other functions, not unimportant, of which publicity, interrogation, and the formal ratification of policies are examples, which must ever be cherished. However much we may distrust

the suffrage and electioneering as real indices of opinion, times must come when, short of deciding discussions by blows, they must be decided by votes. And even if with us the control of the Executive by Parliament has grown to a pitch of outrageous extravagance, to a length when loquacious meddling is endangering the self-respect of all rulers and the stamina of every executive, still there come occasions for the formal sanction of a policy; and no other machinery is comparable to that of an elective chamber. Thus even if under the growing need of a swifter Executive, and the cumbrous inefficiency which we still call parliamentary control, we come back at last to the plan of limiting the periods and simplifying the range of parliamentary action, the parliament will remain from its ancient prestige an immense modifying force, at all times ready to become, should occasion require, the sovereign expression of the national will.

If to these three safeguards—the absence of military force, the parliamentary control over the purse, and the general appeal to Parliament, we add new conditions and guarantees for all possible publicity in every department of Government, and if possible fresh guarantees of free discussion, we shall have ample security that its powers will not be abused. There are many matters yet in which, owing to the trammels of parliamentary tradition, no true publicity is ever obtainable, and which are systematically withdrawn from public opinion. With the decay of the system of parliamentary campaigning, governments may gradually lay aside their genius for stratagems,

coups-de-main, and *coups-de-théâtre*. Gradually they will acquire the habit of giving and expecting confidence, and will have no secrets except as to enemies. It would be easy to suggest new formal guarantees for publicity which might be required, especially as to the full publication of intended measures, the *bonâ fide* results of past measures, and the personal fitness of nominees for public offices. And in this and some other cases it would be reasonable to require a provisional publication, with a view to public approval. With these and such guarantees against abuse, what evil should we run, if we intrusted real and almost dictatorial powers to Government—treating them as we sometimes treat a scientific commission—and withdrawing from Parliament the duty of daily control, were to leave it to the action of public opinion?

After all, the only real guarantee for this or any system of government lies in the constant and healthy activity of public opinion. A standard of general education which could raise up opinion in the true sense of the word, that is the organic conviction of the active citizens, as the sole recognised source both of Power and of Freedom, would suffice alone to solve a whole knot of political difficulties. The Government which can endure genuine freedom of speech can never become oppressive, and the people which feels the superiority of moral pressure over direct intervention in government will never have an incompetent government. Already the subtle and vitalising power of opinion is felt in every vein of the national life. The task of the future—and it is the task of a sound

education—is to organise and define its action. Even now its vast superiority as a controlling power over appeals to the suffrage and to parliamentary divisions is making itself felt. It is infinitely more elastic, it allows for continual modification, it guides, instead of dislocating, executive action, and it takes into account the relative values of men or of groups. The problem of republican Authority is solved the day that the people have learned that their part in the State is to study, watch, review, stimulate, and thereby control Government whilst abstaining from meddling with its acts till they grow insupportable. And the people will have learned this the day that a statesman has appeared who recognises in them the capacity for this part.

It is not indeed the people from whom the obstacles to Authority arise. Their democracy and distrust of personal ascendency is the reaction of revolt against the personal objects with which ascendency so often has been sought. If they cast off authority, it is because for untold generations they have found it prepared to treat them as its servants. If they insist on assuming government themselves, it is because they fear, from long experience, that none other than themselves will deal with them evenly. Of themselves, in their own affairs, such is not the spirit they display. There they often show the strongest instinct towards authority, and the plainest readiness to accept it frankly. It is a stock accusation against them that they fling themselves blindly into the arms of leaders, and surrender their freedom in pursuit of a common cause. Once admit them to the sense of being equal

citizens with the rest, and show them the ruler whom they can feel to be honestly theirs, and they will exhibit a force of discipline which will startle and shame the cabals and coteries of Parliament and the impracticable obstinacy of municipal egotism. The principle of Authority is in no danger from the growing incorporation of the people in the State, nor from the inevitable advance of the Republican ideal. It is these alone that can restore it. Let the man but appear, and the time and the people are ready. Show us but the men who require no other title for authority but superior capacity to serve the public, who know not classes and orders, but the nation as a whole, who come before the people not as their creatures but as their rulers, who will watch public opinion, as the seaman watches his compass, not to go where it points, but to learn what are the ever varying conditions of his course. Show us but the men who feel themselves capable of ruling by inspiring convictions, not by forcing obedience, men who can and will govern by grappling with the difficulties of the present, and that in the spirit of the future, and we shall have no lack of willing co-operation and disciplined following of their lead. Show us such men, and the problem will be solved, and the ascendency of personal greatness will have become but the organ and expression of intelligent popular conviction.

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